

Palestinian legislature calls emergency session

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Palestinian lawmakers will hold an emergency meeting Saturday to discuss the crisis caused by Israeli sanctions against the Palestinian National Authority, officials said Wednesday. "We are calling a special session for Saturday in Ramallah to discuss the current situation and how to face the Israeli measures," Ahmad Quria, speaker of the elected Palestinian Legislative Council, told Agence France Presse. The 88-member council began its summer recess last week and had not been due to meet again until late in the year. Israel imposed harsh economic sanctions on the Palestinian territories last week in response to a double suicide bombing in Jerusalem. PNA officials said the Israeli measures are costing Palestinians \$8 million a day in lost earnings in addition to the \$40 million in unpaid tax revenues.

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Prince Hassan reiterates while there can be no peace without security, there can be no security without peace

In spite of Netanyahu's public position, Crown Prince visit to Jerusalem reveals possibility of breakthrough

By Ramzi E. Khoury
from West Jerusalem

HIS ROYAL Highness Crown Prince Hassan said at a joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Wednesday that the region is living a very dangerous crisis and is on the brink of revisiting violence, however, he had heard from Mr. Netanyahu a commitment to the rejuvenation of hope.

"I think we are living a very dangerous crisis. We are on the brink of revisiting violence and clearly we should do anything that we can to avoid another eruption of violence. I want to make it clear that we are also on the brink [of violence,] possibly because of the difficulties we have lived through in this region, of rejuvenating the peace process, and reestablishing hope, and I think I have heard today from the prime minister [a] commitment to the rejuvenation of hope, but we have to be realistic and cautious."

Initially it was reported that His Majesty King Hussein would be making the trip to Jerusalem on Wednesday, the first such trip to the holy city, but instead the Crown Prince led the high level delegation on behalf of the King as part of the intensive efforts Jordan has been exerting in order to reduce tensions and find a way to bring back a resumption of the stalled peace process.

"For my part, and on behalf of Prime Minister [Abdul Salam] Majali along with Minister [Fayez] Tarawneh, I would like to say that on behalf of His Majesty the King, we have been able to open a very valuable discussion, a very valuable analysis on the current situation with Mr. Netanyahu and his key cabinet colleagues. Of course, we look forward to a visit by Prime Minister Netanyahu and his cabinet colleagues at a time to be [set] in the near future."

It was reported in Israel that Mr. Netanyahu would visit Jordan on Wednesday, exactly one week after his meeting with the Crown Prince yesterday in addition to reports that U.S. Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross will be in the region at the end of this week to be followed by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on the condition that



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan during his one-on-one meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Wednesday. The meeting was followed by another broad meeting in which the two leaders were joined by officials from both governments (Photo by Boghos)

Mr. Ross would have paved the way for concrete results to be achieved upon her arrival (See story below).

Speaking after an hour of one-on-one talks with the Israeli premier followed by a broad meeting that included Prime Minister Majali, Foreign Minister Tarawneh and Minister of Industry and Trade Hani Mulki from the Jordanian side, and Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon, Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani and others from the Israeli side, the Crown Prince stressed Jordan's conviction that "there can't be peace without security, or security without peace" while at the same time highlighting the effect violence has had over the course of peace.

"I want to say that Jordan is committed to the concept of no peace without security and no security without peace. I want to say very clearly to both Israel and the Palestinian leaderships that it is our hope that full security cooperation can be resumed. We received [Palestinian] President [Yasser] Arafat (Tuesday) in Jordan, and we impressed upon him the importance of the fact that we live a period of anticipation prior to outrage such as the disaster that took place in Jerusalem, the tragic loss of life."

"I say, anticipation, in the sense that with the absence of progress in the peace process, clearly the possibilities of extremism, destroying and

derailing the peace process, are many. Our frustration is that violence continues to threaten us, to menace us and all that we can do is to speak of containment. So, I would like to say very clearly that we are dealing here with a human peace, a peace that affects life, promotes life and promotes human dignity; in particular, I refer to the Palestinian people," Prince Hassan stressed.

Suggesting that in spite of Mr. Netanyahu's public hard-line position, during their closed meetings, the prime minister was open to the idea of reducing measures taken against the Palestinian people after last Wednesday's double suicide bombing, the Crown Prince told Mr. Netanyahu at the press conference "your comment today in terms of humanitarian measures, particularly on the questions of food and medicine and hope, fully on the question of the free passage, all the issues that we have [discussed concerning] the 12 measures [Israel took against the Palestinians], are subject for review."

On his part, Mr. Netanyahu seemed as ardent as ever in his hardline policy towards the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) reiterating over and over again in response to questions from the press that the PNA will have to fight terrorism first before Israel takes a step forward.

"If they begin to fight terrorism, we will review the various steps that were taken in order to make them fight terrorism," the Israeli premier

said, adding that his government is "firm in the measures we have taken."

Implying that the PNA is a supporter of terrorism and attempting to justify his hard-line position, Mr. Netanyahu asked the reporters why is it that no-one questions the U.S. on the reasons they impose sanctions on Libya, a statement that prompted the Crown Prince to comment that "the U.S. does not live with the Libyans" and reiterating Jordan's vision for a "relationship of interdependence" between the Palestinians and Israelis as well as the Jordanian and Israeli people.

"provided there is a clear commitment on a code of conduct" on the part of all parties.

The Crown Prince added that "we cannot be judgmental of the responsibilities that others shoulder. All that we can say is to continue to emphasize the importance of full coordination and cooperation."

Taking a position in harmony with that advocated by Jordan, Mr. Kahalani told the Jordan Times "I don't believe personally in the closures, we will find a way out of this together." When asked if he thought that there will be major violence erupting soon, he said that he did not believe that and added that there is no other way but to "convince our prime minister and Chairman Arafat to sit together and solve the problem."

However, Mr. Kahalani said he believes the PNA is not doing enough to block "terror-

ists" from crossing into Israel, and when reminded that there was no proof that those who carried out the double bombing came from territories under the jurisdiction of the PNA, he said: "I have a feeling this is not so. Sometimes there is a feeling that comes from inside... you can imagine," but the minister refused to elaborate further.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian news agency Al Quds Press reported from Nicosia Wednesday that the two men who blew themselves up in Jerusalem last week were Palestinians from 'Ain Al Hilweh refugee camp in Lebanon and who had joined the Islamic Jihad organisation eight months ago and entered Israel two months back in order to carry out the bombing. They based their information on a "knowledgeable" source.

After his meetings with the Israeli premier and members of his cabinet, the Crown Prince called on Israeli President Ezer Weizman at his official residence in west Jerusalem where they conferred on the latest developments concerning peace.

After their talks, the Israeli president who enjoys a ceremonial post, expressed hope "that very soon, the military authority will find a way to lessen the tightness on the West Bank" and expressed that "we fully realise that it is not an easy life when you can't go from one place to another."

When asked by a reporter if they were optimistic, both the Crown Prince and Israeli president agreed that if it wasn't for optimism, the region would be suffering chronic depression.

Earlier Wednesday, Israel allowed Palestinian workers into Jewish settlements and industrial zones in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and lifted a ban on raw materials headed for Palestinian factories, but its symbolic ease on measures taken against the Palestinians in retaliation for the double suicide bombing last week fell short of lifting a ban that keeps more than 50,000 labourers away from their jobs in Israel, allowing free movement between the autonomous territories or releasing badly needed PNA funds.



His Majesty King Hussein Wednesday receives a delegation from the Israeli Labour Federation in Amman (Photo by Yusef Al Allan)

King Hussein stresses need for collective effort to give momentum to peace process

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Wednesday emphasised the need for collective efforts on the part of the peace-loving people and the peace camp to give momentum to the peace process.

Reviewing the latest developments in the peace process with a visiting delegation from the Israeli Labour Federation, the King said: "He is most welcome any time. I always said that if his choice is peace then he will find a partner here that will do everything possible to see that it will materialise into reality."

The King said that the

efforts to achieve just and durable peace.

After the meeting the King told reporters: "Prince Hassan's visit to Israel today was a way of reflection of our total commitment to peace and our desire to see progress achieved there, regardless of the difficulties."

Referring to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coming visit here the King said: "He is most welcome any time. I always said that if his choice is peace then he will find a partner here that will do everything possible to see that it will materialise into reality."

The King said that the

easing of the sufferings of the Palestinian people is basic and necessary at this stage otherwise any other measures "will only make people desperate and frustrated and pave the way for the enemies of peace to achieve their ends, something which we do not want to see happening. I believe the Prince's visit to Israel came at the appropriate moment."

About his expectations the King said, "I am keen to see the contacts and the talks held in an atmosphere that would be conducive to the continuation of the peace process."

Palestinians stream into Gaza after Israel reopens border

RAFAH, Egypt (AFP) — Israel Wednesday reopened the international border with Egypt allowing hundreds of Palestinians who had been stranded here for one week to stream into the Gaza Strip, officials here said.

The move came one day after Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, joining in an international chorus of condemnation, urged Israel to ease an economic blockade imposed on Palestinian areas after last week's bomb attack in Jerusalem.

"Israel reopened the Rafah border post and so far 350 Palestinians from among 500 who have been stranded here since last Wednesday" have crossed

into Gaza," said Mosaad Badawi, a border official here.

"A total of 800 people will be allowed across the border [into Gaza] today and from Thursday traffic will resume normally following the Israeli decision," he said.

Israel also allowed trucks transporting Egyptian products into Gaza, he said.

According to Mr. Badawi, many of the Palestinians who went to Gaza expressed fears that the Israeli authorities will send them back, "especially the non-residents who carry a tourist visa."

Most of the Palestinians who were stranded here since last Wednesday for the first time since the attack

were transiting through Egypt on their way to Gaza to spend summer holidays with their families.

On Tuesday dozens of Palestinian women staged a peaceful protest on the Egyptian side of the border demanding to be allowed into Gaza.

The protest came as Mr. Mubarak told visiting Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy in Cairo that the border post should be reopened to get food and medicine in for the Palestinians.

The Israeli army permitted Palestinian labourers to enter Jewish settlements and industrial zones in the West Bank and Gaza Strip Wednesday for the first time since the attack

5 die in U.N. helicopter crash in Lebanon

TYRE (AFP) — A U.N. helicopter exploded over south Lebanon late Wednesday, killing four Italian soldiers and a passenger, a U.N. spokesman said.

The helicopter was carrying out a night training flight when it exploded at 9.10 p.m. local time and came down near the village of Tyre in an Israeli-occupied zone of south Lebanon, the spokesman for the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) said.

All five people on board — four crew members and a passenger — were killed in the explosion, which appeared to be an accident, he said.

Albright prepared to make Middle East trip this month

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Secretary of State Madeleine Albright announced plans Wednesday to make her first Middle East trip this month but conditioned her visit on progress toward improving security.

In a major address on the Middle East, Ms. Albright also called for accelerating talks on a final settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, saying "today this step is urgent and important."

In announcing the planned trip, Ms. Albright signalled that Washington's patience with the sides was wearing thin after five months of deadlock in the peace process.

"The days of avoiding hard decisions are over," she said. "It is absolutely essential that hard decisions be made. We cannot make them, the parties have to

make them."

Arguing that "the people have chosen peace," Ms. Albright put the onus squarely on the leaders to show flexibility and stressed that improved security in the region was the basis for moving forward.

"Provided there is some progress on security issues, I am prepared to travel to the Middle East at the end of this month," Ms. Albright said.

Peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians broke down after Israel broke ground in March on a Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians hope will be the capital of a future state.

The peace process suffered a crippling blow when two suicide bombers killed 13 Israelis in a Jerusalem market last week.

'U.S. is looking for positive moves by Iran'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The U.S. is looking for positive actions from Iran's new president before deciding whether to soften its stance, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Wednesday.

"We have very serious problems with Iran," Ms. Albright said in response to questions following a major address on the Middle East.

Iran sponsors international terrorism, is undercutting the Middle East peace process and is purchasing dangerous chemical, nuclear and biological weapons, she said. "We are looking for actions. And that is what we're going to base our judgement on," she said.

Iran's new President Mohammed Khatami began his first day of work Wednesday after being officially installed in the presidential compound in Tehran.

The new president, who was sworn in Monday after his landslide election victory in May, is expected to present his 44-point list next week, within the constitutionally mandated 14-day period.

The administration is expected to be watching the appointments for signs that Mr. Khatami is prepared to engage in a normal relationship with the U.S.

The U.S. broke diplomatic relations with Iran in April 1980 after Islamic militants took hostages at the U.S. embassy in Tehran, triggering a 14-month crisis that humiliated Washington.

The so-called permanent status negotiations deal with the thorniest issues of the peace process including the political status of Jerusalem, the return of refugees and the creation of a Palestinian state.

of the West Bank.

In her address, Ms. Albright signalled that Washington was prepared to engage in fast-track negotiations on final status, arguing that it would help avoid crises.

"If the parties have a clear, mutual and favourable sense of the ultimate direction of negotiations, it will be easier for them to overcome setbacks, and avoid distractions along the way," she said.

"This will require accelerating permanent status negotiations." Special Middle East coordinator Dennis Ross was to travel to the region later this week to discuss security in the region in the wake of last week's double suicide bombing. To bolster security, Ms. Albright said the Palestinians must be prepared to

share information with Israel about extremist activities and coordinate law enforcement action.

"Israelis and Palestinians must unite to defeat terrorism, which is their common enemy," she said.

Ms. Albright Wednesday telephoned Mr. Netanyahu to discuss the breakdown of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Israeli officials said.

Ms. Albright's call came before she delivered her speech in Washington.

The U.S. ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk, held talks in Jerusalem with Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai Wednesday and was to meet Mr. Netanyahu later in the evening, officials said.

Islamic Jihad denies Jerusalem bombers came from Lebanon

BEIRUT (Agencies) — The Islamic Jihad in Palestine on Wednesday denied reports that the two men who committed a double suicide bombing in Israel last week were Jihad members from a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon.

"The information ... which asserted that the suicide bombers were Islamic Jihad members who infiltrated Palestine from Lebanon is not true," a spokesman for the Palestinian group told AFP in Beirut.

The spokesman, however, refused to confirm or deny whether the two suicide bombers were Jihad members from outside Lebanon.

"The Islamic Jihad, while it asserts its blessing to the heroic operation and welcomes it as a response to Zionist crimes against our people, nation and sacred places, confirms that it has not issued any position related to the identities or the group to which the suicide bombers belonged," he said.

The Palestinian news agency Quds Press said earlier Wednesday it received a phone call in Nicosia from a "knowledgeable" Palestinian source who said the two suicide bombers were from the 'Ain Al Hilweh refugee camp in southern Lebanon.

The source said the two, aged 20 and 21, were originally members of President Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) who joined the Islamic Jihad group some eight months ago.

The two men entered Israel a month ago "without facing any difficulties," the source told Quds Press, quoted in the Palestinian daily Al Ayyam.

The source refused to give their names "to protect their families and relatives."

Israel has been unable to identify the two men who blew

'Israel will apologise if bombers came from abroad'

TEL AVIV (R) — An Israeli minister said on Wednesday his country would apologise to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat if it became evident two suicide bombers who killed 13 people in a west Jerusalem market came from abroad.

"If we know that the terrorists came from outside, we will apologise to Arafat," Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani told the Arabic newspaper Al Itihad on Tuesday.

A police spokeswoman confirmed Mr. Kahalani made the remark.

The identity of the attackers, who set off bombs that ripped through the central Mahane Yehuda Market July 30, is still unknown. More than 170 people were injured in the attack.

Israel suspended peace talks with the Palestinian National Authority and demanded Mr. Arafat crack down on Islamic militants, insisting the Palestinian leader had not done enough to fight "terrorism."

The Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups have killed scores of Israelis in suicide bombings since 1994. Most suicide bombers have come from Israeli-ruled areas of the West Bank.

Mr. Netanyahu has said even if the bombers came from abroad, they had to be helped by Arab militants operating in Palestinian-ruled areas.

themselves up in a crowded west Jerusalem market last Wednesday, killing 13 other people and injuring more than 150.

It has focused suspicion on the Islamic resistance movement Hamas and has blamed the Palestinian National Authority for not doing enough to prevent anti-Israeli attacks by Palestinian elements from its territory.

But top Arafat aide Tayeb Abdel Rahim accused Israeli officials of "lying" about the bombers' origins and said he had information they came from abroad.

He said Israeli investigators had determined that the explosives were the same type used by Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrillas battling Israel's

occupation of a buffer zone in southern Lebanon.

A statement issued in the name of Hamas originally claimed responsibility for the blast and demanded the release of Palestinian radicals and Hizbollah guerrillas held in Israeli prisons.

But Hamas officials cast doubt on the authenticity of the statement.

A similar Hamas statement was distributed in the Palestinian territories on Tuesday warning of further attacks.

Hamas and the Islamic Jihad fiercely oppose Arafat's autonomy accords with Israel and claim responsibility for most bomb attacks against Israeli targets.

Meanwhile, a Hamas spokesman said in remarks

published Wednesday that confusion over who carried out the bombings means that its planners do not want to be known.

Hamas spokesman Mahmoud Al Zahar told the Egyptian weekly magazine Al Musawar in an interview: "This confusion in announcements of claims of responsibility for the incident means that the party that planned and implemented it does not want to announce openly for reasons of its own."

The magazine did not say where or when the meeting with Mr. Zahar took place.

Mr. Zahar did not repeat the original Hamas claim of responsibility. But asked if he expected "new operations" as promised unless Israel freed the Palestinian prisoners it held, he told the magazine: "Israeli prisons hold 4,000 detainees, 250 of which are Hamas and the rest from [Islamic] Jihad and others. The Palestinian street is boiling from peace which has not been achieved ... the embargo on food and on the other hand we have corruption and bribery... what are you waiting for?"

Israel closed the West Bank and Gaza after the twin bombing, stopping tens of thousands of Arab workers from reaching their jobs in Israel, paralysing trade and shutting down factories. Israel has detained more than 170 Palestinians since the attacks.

Palestinians have condemned the Israeli steps as collective punishment and warned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that tough sanctions would breed despair, strengthen extremists and weaken Mr. Arafat, already under pressure over allegations of corruption in his cabinet.



A Lebanese doctor examines the body of shepherd Ali Moussa Aqel, 72, Tuesday, at a Hizbollah clinic in the village of Libbaya in south Lebanon. Aqel and another Lebanese shepherd were killed in Israeli air strikes against Hizbollah targets in south Lebanon. Four others were wounded (AFP photo)

Israeli warplanes raid Lebanon Hizbollah hints of suicide attacks

RASHAYA, Lebanon (AP) — Israeli warplanes attacked suspected guerrilla hideouts Tuesday in southern Lebanon, killing two farmers, and Hizbollah militants suggested they would carry out suicide bombings inside Israel to avenge the deaths of their comrades.

Three people, including two boys, were wounded in the raids north of the Israeli-occupied zone in southern Lebanon. Lebanese security officials said another civilian died later when a roadside bomb, apparently planted by guerrillas, went off in the zone.

As Hizbollah buried three field commanders and two other guerrillas who were killed by Israeli commandos a day earlier, the group's deputy secretary-general hinted that he would take the fight inside Israel itself.

"Israel will never have

peace of mind," Sheikh Na'een Qassem told 8,000 mourners marching behind the coffins in the southern city of Nabatieh. The crowd shouted, "Death to Israel, death to America."

In addition to criticising Israel's actions in Lebanon, Sheikh Qassem attacked Israel's crackdown on the Palestinians after two suicide bombings in Jerusalem last week.

He suggested suicide bombings against Israel would not stop.

"Israel will find explosive charges and martyrdom-seeking men in every position inside Palestine and the occupied lands," he said.

Hizbollah officials declined to explain whether Sheikh Qassem meant his group would follow the lead of the militants who have carried out suicide bombings in Israel.

In south Beirut, where one of the five slain guerrillas was buried, Hizbollah chief Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah urged his men to fight on but declined to say how and when retaliation would come.

"I will not fire off threats," he told several thousand mourners. "We will leave the actions of the resistance and holy warriors to speak for themselves."

The Iranian-backed Shiite Muslim Hizbollah has been accused by Israel in the past of planning attacks inside it. Israeli media reports have said last week's bombers in Jerusalem used explosives employed by Hizbollah.

Lebanese Shiite militants, who carried out the suicide bombings of U.S. installations in Beirut that killed more than 260 Americans in 1983-84, have largely confined attacks in recent years to southern Lebanon, where

Israel occupies a border strip. Hostilities have occasionally spilled over to northern Israel in the form of rocket or mortar fire.

In the air raids Tuesday, Israeli jets fired eight air-to-surface missiles at a mountainous area near the villages of Libbaya and Yehmor, about 16 kilometres southwest of the town of Rashaya and about 50 kilometres southeast of Beirut.

The Israeli army confirmed the raid, saying it aimed to silence fire directed at Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army militiamen.

Lebanese security officials, speaking on customary condition of anonymity, said that two farmers who were working fields near Libbaya were killed in the raid. A third farmer and two boys aged 11 and 13 were wounded by shrapnel.

Libya urges Arabs to aid Comoros

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Libya urged Arab countries on Tuesday to provide urgent economic aid to the Comoros Islands where separatists on two islands want to restore French rule because of worsening poverty.

The official JANA news agency cited a communiqué from the Ministry for Arab Unity, urging Arab countries to "help restore stability" in the Indian Ocean island nation where the population is mainly Muslim.

Libya called for the "safeguard of the Muslim identity of the Comoros and its links with the Arab League and urges Arab countries to supply urgent economic aid to Moroni to help it restore stability and prevent any foreign interference," JANA reported.

The Arab League said Tuesday it had received an appeal from the Comoros government asking for help to resolve the crisis triggered by the unilateral declaration of independence of Anjouan the second biggest of the country's three islands.

Separatists on the smaller Comoran island of Moheli hoisted French flags and set up road blocks Tuesday as the separatist movement gained ground.

'Criminal with 1,000 faces' on trial in Iran

TEHRAN (Agencies) — An Iranian man dubbed the "criminal with 1,000 faces" has gone on trial on charges of murder, rape, kidnapping and adultery, the government newspaper Iran News reported Wednesday.

Ahmad Taghi Abadi, 38, is being tried by a court in the southern city of Shiraz for a crime spree which took him to several cities using different identities, the daily said.

The newspaper said Taghi Abadi admitted his crimes during the opening session of his trial Tuesday.

It said he is charged with "three murders, six counts of adultery, 12 kidnappings, four rapes and four counts of engaging in illegal sexual relations."

Several of his victims were girls under the age of 10, Iran

News said, adding that he was arrested following the kidnapping of a young girl from a village.

The trial comes on the heels of the conviction of an Iranian cab driver dubbed the "Vampire of Tehran" for raping and murdering 11 women.

Gholamreza Kordieh, 28, was sentenced to death by public hanging by a Tehran court Monday. The sentence must be upheld by the supreme court before it can be carried out.

Newspapers said "the vampire" burned his victims after killing them so they would not be recognised. They said he had been arrested in 1994 on charges including kidnapping and theft but had escaped before going on trial. People called him the "Tehran vampire" because all the killings were at night.

King Fahd approves regional assemblies

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Arabia's King Fahd approved the appointment of 200 men to 13 regional assemblies across the kingdom for a new four-year term, part of political reforms introduced in 1993.

The state Saudi Press Agency said the approval was made on Tuesday in a letter to interior minister, Prince Nayef. The king named 20 men to each of the assemblies in the capital Riyadh and the Holy City of Mecca and 10 in the Holy City of Medina.

He named 15 men for each of the other assemblies, but it was not immediately clear whether any new members were named.

King Fahd set up the regional assemblies in 13 provinces in September 1993, one month after he named 60 members of the consultative Shura Council — the kingdom's first in 60 years — as part of long-promised political reforms in the world's largest oil producer.

Last month the kingdom

raised the number of Shura members to 90, widening representation to include active and retired military officers, senior government officials, business executives and representatives of the Shiite Muslim minority.

They were sworn in before King Fahd, signalling the start of the council's second four-year session.

Diplomats in the kingdom said it was difficult to gauge what impact the body's new make-up would have on the

reforms, seen as fledgling steps towards giving Saudis more say in running the country's affairs, but a long way from Western-style democracy.

Most of the members of the regional assemblies belong to prominent tribal and trading families and clans.

Senior members of the royal family have traditionally controlled the country's administration, occupying many top positions at national and provincial levels.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:10 Cartoons
15:00 America's Funniest People
15:30 He Shoots He Scores
16:00 French Programmes
19:00 News in French
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Trivial Pursuit
20:00 Parenthood
20:30 Lois and Clark — Superman
21:10 Kung Fu
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature Film
23:59 Step By Step

PRAYER TIMES

04:23 Fajr
05:49 (Sunrise) Dhuhr
12:41 Dhuhr
16:22 Asr
19:33 Maghreb
21:00 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweiffah, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church

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Tel. 773131

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 5516245
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675941

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Normal summer weather conditions will prevail with winds northwesterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Mini/Max. Temperatures

Amman 17/30
Aqaba 24/29
Deserts 16/34
Jordan Valley 22/38

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 28, Aqaba 37. Humidity readings: Amman 60 per cent, Aqaba 40 per cent.

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Bassam Karadshah 799200
Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi 894788
Dr. Salim Dababih 778751
Dr. Khalid Abdo 657129
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asera pharmacy 637055
Nalronkh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shameisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'ammeh 250080
Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:

Dr. Samir Al Lawzi 989601
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue

630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 343402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussain Medical Centre

813813/32

Khalifeh Maternity 642816
Akhil Maternity 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musabir Hospital 667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09883323
Zarqa National Hospital 09900560
Ibn Sina Hospital 09986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital 09990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital 02127555
Greek Catholic Hospital 02127275
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital 021247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital

031314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified.

Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or 08 (53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

09:35 Samra (RJ)
09:45 New Delhi (RJ)
10:05 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
10:05 Bombay (RJ)
10:20 Bahrain (RJ)
10:25 Beirut (RJ)
10:40 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
11:00 Colombo (RJ)
15:25 Kuwait (RJ)
16:15 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:05 Moscow (RJ)
17:30 London (RJ)
18:55 Doha (RJ)
19:10 Athens (RJ)
19:20 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
19:45 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)

Other Flights

13:00 Riyadh (SV)

13:55 Doha (GF)

14:40 Sharjah (AH)
16:00 Rome (AZ)
19:50 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:00 Cairo (MS)
21:10 Beirut (ME)
01:20 Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)
05:40 London (BA)
09:00 Dubai (EK)

Royal Wings (RW)

(For Thursday and Friday)

08:45 Aqaba (RW)
10:05 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
10:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
18:20 Tel Aviv (RW)
19:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
22:20 Aqaba (RW)
23:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

06:45 Beirut (RJ)
07:20 Moscow (RJ)
09:10 Kuwait (RJ)
11:35 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
11:55 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:10 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:20 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:45 Amsterdam, Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
13:00 Doha (RJ)
13:10 Paris (RJ)
13:20 Athens (RJ)

Other Flights

13:00 Riyadh (SV)

13:25 London (RJ)

21:00 Madrid (RJ)

21:10 Cairo (RJ)

21:20 Larnaca (RJ)

21:25 Jeddah (RJ)

22:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

22:25 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights

04:00 Athens (OA)

06:15 Istanbul (TK)

08:45 Beirut (ME)

08:50 Amsterdam (GA)

09:10 London (BA)

14:30 Riyadh (SV)

14:45 Bahrain, Abu Dhabi (GF)

15:30 Annaba (Algeria) (AH)

17:00 Rome (AZ)

21:10 Tel Aviv (LY)

22:00 Cairo (MS)

02:30 Amsterdam (KL)

08:45 Beirut (ME)

10:00 Dubai (EK)

10:25 London (BA)

Royal Wings

(For Thursday and Friday)

07:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
09:15 Aqaba (RW)
10:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
17:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
18:55 Tel Aviv (RW)
21:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
22:50 Aqaba (RW)

'Media assertions regarding the Judiciary untrue'

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Recent assertions by certain columnists in the media, regarding the Judiciary's supposed lack of independence, are untrue, the executive power makes recommendations and does not impose decisions on the Judiciary, according to Minister of Justice Riad Shaka'a.

To further support the independence of the Judiciary and end perceived gaps in the 1972 law, Mr. Shaka'a said that a new law, which limits the powers of the minister of justice to administrative matters, will be finalised soon.

"The minister has no power to interfere with appointments in the judicial branch," Mr. Shaka'a told the Jordan Times. "Those who asserted that I blocked the appointment of judges nominated by the judiciary council are mistaken. They should verify their information before they write."

Debate in the local media was recently sparked following an article, by Al Ra'i columnist Fahed Fanek, accusing the minister of justice of interference in the appointment of judges.

Dr. Fanek charged that the minister was capriciously appointing and sacking judges.

Sultan Hattab, also a columnist at Al Ra'i daily, heavily criticised "those who believe that the judiciary is no longer independent" and stated "they should make an effort to look at the law."

According to the law, the Judicial Council appoints judges upon the recommendation of the minister of justice. The minister can recommend a number of nominees for a certain post if such becomes vacant.

The Judicial Council, comprised of nine senior judges from the

Supreme Court, Appellate Court and Court of Cassation, selects and then accepts or rejects the recommendation. The minister's recommendations are not binding to the Judicial Council by law.

"There is nothing in the law which endows the minister with the power to expel judges," Mr. Hattab said. "In fact, this is one of the strongest guarantees to safeguard the independence of the Judiciary in Jordan."

"How can they generalise when the ministry recommended 207 judges, with a minimum of 15 to 20 years experience, to the Judiciary Council?" Mr. Shaka'a asked. "Of these, only seven were selected."

"Attacks are rather personal," he added but declined to elaborate.

If any given minister abuses his privilege and recommends friends or relatives for the post, the nominations would be easily detected, according to legal experts.

This has happened in the past with other ministers, they affirmed.

Regardless of the veracity of accusations of legal abuses, a new judiciary law cancelling this provision and limiting the minister's powers to administrative matters has already been drafted and is expected to be submitted to the Cabinet for approval within a week. Upon the Cabinet's approval, the proposal will then be sent to Parliament for endorsement.

In early July, the ministry of justice announced the formation of specialised committees, comprising court justices, law professors and lawyers, to redraft Jordanian judicial legislation.

The move, intended to modernise the judicial system and improve the performance level of justices, was taken upon Royal directives from His Majesty King Hussein.

These directives urged further enhancements towards the independence of the Judiciary.

The message instructed the government to initiate measures to guarantee judicial independence and improve the judges' living standards through the allocation of special allowances.

In a letter to the government, the King affirmed that the judicial system should continue to serve as a model of competence, integrity and independence, and that, as such, a reexamination of the 1972 Judiciary Law should be conducted.

According to Mr. Shaka'a, the draft law, with amendments added by the Judiciary Council, will be submitted to the Prime Ministry this week. The law, he asserted, is an implementation, in letter and in spirit, of the King's directives and desire to preserve the independence of the Judiciary.

The executive power, according to the new draft, is technically restricted to an administrative role, ending the controversy over the issue of recommendations once and for all.

"It is unlikely that the draft will be promulgated as a temporary law but I hope it will be treated with expediency (at the Lower House of Parliament)," Mr. Shaka'a stated. If approved, the law "will ensure total independence, and also upgrade minimum qualification standards."

But the minister's right to recommend the appointment of judges was only the first of criticisms levelled against the executive power.

Judges have been faulting the government for not allocating special funds to improve their living conditions.

In 1995, 23 of Jordan's senior judges threatened to resign until the Cabinet pledged to meet their demands which consisted mainly

of improving standards of living. There are loopholes, Mr. Shaka'a conceded, but plans to rectify the situation are ongoing.

The health insurance system will be amended to include military as well as the already covered civil hospitals, the minister said.

Those judges who have served for a period of 20 to 30 years will be entitled to duty free cars and will be permitted to keep their vehicles after their retirement, he added.

Additionally, plans are under consideration to give privileges to children of justices in schools and universities, according to Mr. Shaka'a.

Housing plans have also been developed, notably for those justices who reside in remote areas, he affirmed.

According to the minister, the new Palace of Justice will be operative by September and as such will alleviate current pressures on the judges.

The eight-storey building, constructed at the cost of JD 16 million, will be fully computerised to facilitate work, he said.

In a step which Mr. Shaka'a described as "historic and unprecedented," 14 highly-qualified inspectors were appointed by the Judiciary Council to monitor the performance of the Kingdom's 365 judges.

Evaluations pertaining thereto will be submitted to the council for study and consequent action.

The current courts and justices' offices will be relocated from the old Palace of Justice, in downtown Amman, to a new building in the Abdali district as of July 15.

The building will comprise the Higher Court of Justice, the Criminal Court, the Court of First Instance, the Small Claims Court, the Appellate Court, the Amman Municipality Court and the Customs and Income Tax Court.



Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Wednesday addresses a meeting of health specialists at Al Bashir hospital (Petra photo)

Premier instructs ministry to open specialised health clinics

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali instructed the Ministry of Health and Medical Care to open specialised clinics at health centres throughout the country so as to reduce pressure on central clinics at Al Bashir Hospital.

During a visit to Al Bashir Hospital, the premier described Jordan as entering a new stage of change, with skilled human resources playing a key role in promoting medical services.

The next stage will be based on decentralisation, and medical staff will be expected to dispense drugs and protect public funds by avoiding medicine waste, he said.

The government is invested in transforming the public medical sector into an independent non-profit national institution which will raise health and medical service standards, according to the premier.

Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi briefed Dr. Majali on a ministry programme for upgrading the efficiency of medical staff, preparations for creating a medical library as well as programmes, seminars, lectures and other activities.

The ministry has been closely cooperating with the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Royal Medical Services and the Jordanian Medical Association to create a health acad-

emy at Al Bashir Hospital, Dr. Kurdi affirmed.

He lamented the hospital's overload, notably in the outpatient departments which daily handle an estimated 5,000 cases.

Al Bashir Hospital Director Dr. Mahmoud Awad detailed plans for enlarging the 874-bed hospital, confirming further expansions by the end of this year, at which time, he said, the hospital will enjoy a 1,000-bed capacity.

Deputy Prime Minister for Services and Minister of Administrative Development Abdullah Ensour, Dr. Kurdi and heads of Ministry of Health and Medical Care departments attended the meeting.

Princess Sumaya attends Y.W.C.A. graduation ceremony

AMMAN (J.T.) — A graduation ceremony for secretaries of the Y.W.C.A. Cultural Centre was attended by HRH Princess Sumaya Bint Al Hassan last night at Y.W.C.A. headquarters, according to a Y.W.C.A. statement.

Y.W.C.A. President Laurie Hass welcomed the Princess and thanked her for attending the event.

Ms. Hass detailed the development of the

centre, emphasising its technological and communications role as well as its efforts in graduating knowledgeable and skillful secretaries to meet the economic and cultural needs of Jordan.

Director of the Centre Zuzette Zakarian Dababneh covered the theoretical and practical experiences to which students are exposed, the statement said.

She noted job opportunities available to graduates.

One of the graduating students thanked the Y.W.C.A. staff for its contributions, according to the statement.

Princess Sumaya then distributed certificates to the graduates as well as gifts to distinguished students.

WHAT'S GOING ON JERASH FESTIVAL

Thursday

- * Performance by Jordanian Oud soloist Sakher Hattar at Armines Steps at 8:30 p.m.
- * Concert by Junii Brasovului of Romania at the North Theatre at 8:30 p.m.
- * Concert by Iraqi artist Kazem Al Sahir at the South Theatre at 8:30 p.m.
- * Performance by the Karak Band for Popular Dramatic Art at the Sound and Light Theatre at 8:30 p.m.
- * Poetry recitals and musical performances at Gracia Theatre at 8:00 p.m.
- * Musical performance by the Family International band, Jordanian bands, and an Egyptian circus show at the main square at 7:00 p.m.

Friday

- * Concert by Lebanese artist Nawal Al Zughbi at the South Theatre at 8:30 p.m.
- * Concert by Junii Brasovului of Romania at the North Theatre at 8:30 p.m.
- * Jordanian play "Farhood Son of Robin Hood" at Armines steps at 8:30 p.m.
- * Musical performances by the Egyptian Tambourah band and Jordanian bands as well as an Egyptian circus show at the main square at 7:00 p.m.
- * Play entitled "Five Dolls and a Woman" (to be followed by a musical performance by Ahmad Al Falih and his band) at Gracia Theatre at 8:00 p.m.
- * Display of handicrafts and sculptures at Zeus vault (Thursday and Friday).

CONCERT

- * Concert by "The New York Broadway Duo" at the American Center, Abdoun on Thursday at 7:30 p.m.

FILM

- * "Private Benjamin" at the American Center, Abdoun on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- * Photography exhibition by Claudia Pedotti at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Centre/Artisana, Jabal Amman, Second Circle (Tel. 647858) until Aug. 16.
- * Middle East Exhibition of Plastic and Rubber Industries at the Amman International Exhibit, Marj Al Hamom, until Aug. 7.
- * Sculpture exhibition by Ibrahim Dayyat at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Aug. 7.

GLOBE programme aims to enhance environmental awareness

By Nadia Mukhlis
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Enhancing environmental awareness, contributing to a scientific understanding of the Earth, and improving student achievements and science and mathematics standards were the main topics discussed in the three-day Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) workshop which ended last Sunday.

Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Masri distributed GLOBE certificates to the 26 participating teachers during the closing ceremony.

The objectives of the workshop were illustrated through the taking of global environmental measurements, reporting global data and using global environmental images.

The GLOBE programme is a hands-on environmental science and programme that unites students, educators and scientists from around the world in studying the global environment, according to Rana Naber, director of the Friends of the Environment (FOE) media committee.

Last October, GLOBE signed an agreement with FOE that the latter might work as Jordan's GLOBE coordinator.

Over 55 countries are currently participating in the programme to connect students via the Internet and provide them the opportunity to exchange environmental views, FOE President Ra'ouf Dabbas affirmed.

The GLOBE is a worldwide network for students working under the guidance of teachers trained to conduct the programme, Mr. Dabbas explained.

The GLOBE students make a core set of environmental observations near their schools and report their data through the Internet to a GLOBE data processing facility, he added.

They receive and use images created from global scholastic data and study environmental topics in their classrooms, Mr. Dabbas maintained.

Over 4,000 schools are currently participating in the GLOBE programme in which students have reported over 500,000 science observations in the areas of atmosphere/climate, hydrology, land cover/biology and soils utilising data to study environment and research projects, he said.

To ensure the applicability of the GLOBE student data for scientific research, environmental scientists worldwide have participated in selecting GLOBE environmental measurements, developing measurement procedures and ensuring overall quality control of data, as scientists around the world use GLOBE data in their environmental impact studies, Ms. Naber stated.

Age-appropriate GLOBE educational materials have been developed by international environmental educators for use in GLOBE schools, she added. Instructors receive special training on teaching measurement procedures,

using GLOBE images and Internet technology for material, Ms. Naber explained.

Broad international participation is integral to GLOBE's design and partners sign bilateral agreements with the United States that schools in their countries might participate in the programme, she added.

In the United States, GLOBE is administered by a federal team which includes the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Science Foundation, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Education, jointly working with over 25 public and local organisations, Ms. Naber stated.

The GLOBE programme brings scientific and environmental issues into the classroom, according to U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Janet Sanderson. "It teaches the skills, hones the talents and piques the curiosity of students in those subjects, forming a cool computer game as students make environmental, climatic and geographic measurements near their schools and then manipulate the satellite data which scientists provide for them," she added.

Ms. Sanderson saluted the efforts of Mr. Dabbas in laying the foundation for GLOBE and in "unceasingly pushing for its implementation." The ceremony took place at the Ma'arif School.

'Government seeks to exempt fertilisers from custom duties'

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Agriculture Mijhem Khreisha Wednesday confirmed that the government is seeking to exempt imported agricultural inputs and fertilisers from customs duty.

This comes as part of endeavours to support the agricultural sector and enable farmers to employ modern technology while increasing food production, Mr. Khreisha stated.

During a meeting with the chairman and board members of the Jordanian Union of Merchants Trading in Agricultural Products, Mr. Khreisha described the Ministry of Agriculture as soon to coordinate with the Ministry of Finance and other

officials to both remove input customs and enable farmers to buy same at reasonable cost.

The minister also heard various union complaints.

The two sides discussed agricultural exports to Lebanon, in accordance with an annual timetable signed by the two countries, and Mr. Khreisha stated that the Lebanese minister of agriculture will soon visit the Kingdom to discuss import and export exchanges.

The trade protocol will also be renewed, he added.

Director of the Agricultural Marketing Organisation (AMO) Dr. Salem Lawzi, briefed union members on his recent visit to Lebanon in which

place he discussed agricultural exchanges and initiated the process of concluding a new agricultural protocol for the 1997-1998 agricultural calendar.

He noted that Jordan annually exports 55,000 tonnes of produce to Lebanon and, in turn, imports approximately 15,000 tonnes of Lebanese agricultural products.

Jordan exports watermelons during the summer as well as a variety of vegetables grown in the Jordan Valley during the winter, according to AMO sources.

The Kingdom imports Lebanese apples and cherries, they said.

'Government plans to gradually lift oil subsidies' — Horani

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government has no plans to raise oil and electricity prices, according to Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Mohamad Saleh Horani.

In an interview with Al Dustour Arabic daily, he detailed government plans to gradually lift oil product subsidies.

"We will be gradually reducing the subsidy in such a way as not to harm the public interest nor the national industry," Mr. Horani asserted.

Jordan is continuing, with the assistance of foreign corporations, to prospect for oil and gas in order to cut down on costs of same, he explained.

"Foreign oil firms have been exploring for oil and gas since 1981 and have

spent an estimated JD 150 million in their search, Mr. Horani stated. "However, prospecting is continuing close to the Iraqi border, near the Dead Sea and other locales," he said.

Currently, the Hamzeh oil well, near the Iraqi border, is producing 40 barrels of crude oil a day, and gas fields at Rishah are producing 28 million cubic feet of gas, used to generate electricity, the minister affirmed.

Total amounts of oil and gas annually produced in the country are worth JD 10.5 million which is a very modest contribution to the country's overall energy resource needs, he added.

Jordan continues to import oil from Iraq and negotiations are under-

way for importing natural gas from Egypt, Mr. Horani stated.

The Kingdom and Qatar are initiating negotiations and plan to name an American company to supply 2.5 million tonnes of gas to Aqaba, he said.

Jordan will be using only half a million tonnes of Qatari gas with the rest transported to Israel, the minister stated.

Until increased amounts of oil and gas finds are discovered, Jordan will continue to import 3.5 million tonnes of crude oil from Iraq, 750,000 tonnes of fuel, 250,000 tonnes of diesel oil and 100,000 tonnes of liquefied gas in accordance with a trade protocol signed with the Iraqi government, he concluded.

Save water... every drop counts!

Hashimoto calls for test ban treaty as Hiroshima recalls nuclear attack

HIROSHIMA (AFP) — Japan marked the 52nd anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima Wednesday with Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto vowing to press nations to ratify a treaty banning nuclear weapons tests.

Speaking to 45,000 people at an annual ceremony at the Peace Memorial Park in the western city, Mr. Hashimoto said a nuclear-free world was the "fervent wish" of Japan, the only country exposed to an atomic bomb attack.

Mr. Hashimoto said there had been "progress" towards eliminating nuclear weapons, referring to the U.N. General Assembly's approval of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) last September.

"Japan has become the first country to ratify the CTBT, and we hope to press other countries to ratify it too so the treaty can take effect as early as possible," he said. The treaty must be ratified by 44 nations with nuclear potential before it can take effect.

At the ceremony, partici-

pants, including survivors of the U.S. attack, observed a minute's silence at 8:15 a.m., the exact time the bomb exploded over Hiroshima in 1945, effectively ending World War II. Two days later there was a second attack on Nagasaki.

Some 1,500 doves were released from the park, which is near the epicentre of the explosion. The park includes the dome and the burnt-out shell of what used to be an industrial exhibition centre.

Mr. Hashimoto laid a wreath and later visited a bomb survivor, a woman called Hideko Goto.

The Hiroshima blast killed an estimated 140,000 people by the end of 1945. Many died instantly, others more slowly from radiation or severe burns.

Hiroshima Mayor Takashi Hiraoka said a further 5,076 people exposed to the bomb had died in the past year, bringing the total death toll to 202,118. Most of the victims are now elderly and suffering from deteriorating health.

"We in Hiroshima are out-

raged that nuclear weapons have yet to be abolished and banished from the face of the Earth," Mr. Hiraoka said, calling for a swift ratification of the CTBT while denouncing the United States for a recent test.

"On the one hand, the United States promises to reduce its stockpiles of nuclear weapons, and on the other hand it obstinately maintains its nuclear testing program. This attitude is utterly devoid of the wisdom needed if all peoples are to coexist," the mayor said.

The United States conducted a plutonium test in early July but maintains it did not violate the CTBT because there were no nuclear byproducts. A second similar experiment is to be carried out later this year.

Martin Harwit, the former U.S. museum director at the centre of a controversy over the Hiroshima bombing two years ago, meanwhile told the Asahi Shimbun that most Americans had not changed their narrow view towards the incident.

"I am currently pessimis-

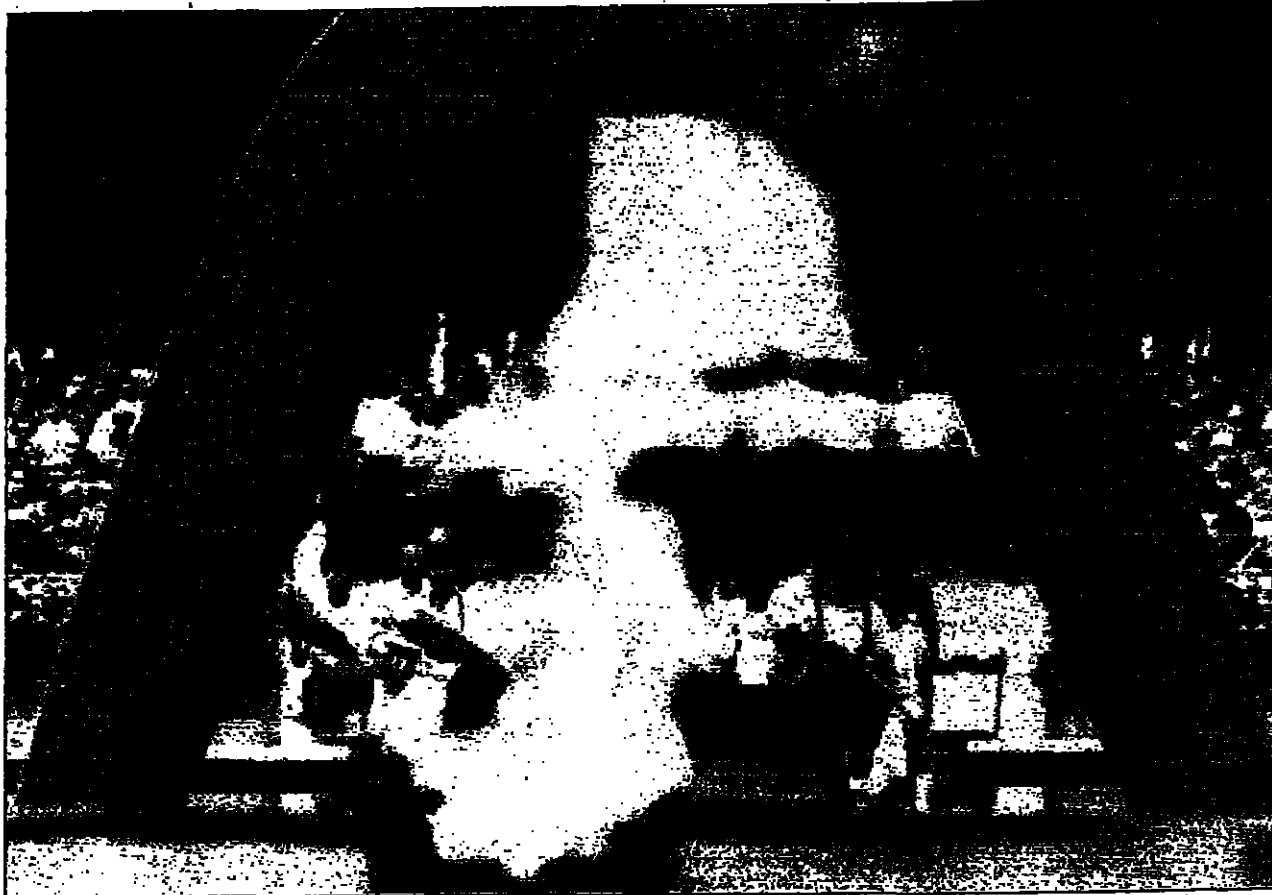
tic that the American people have changed their view. But their view may change in the future," he told the newspaper.

Mr. Harwit resigned as director of the Smithsonian Institution's Air and Space Museum in 1995 after arranging an exhibition featuring the Enola Gay, the B-29 used to drop the bomb on Hiroshima.

American veterans denounced the exhibition for portraying Japanese as innocent victims of the bombing, prompting 81 members of Congress to call on Mr. Harwit to stand down. The exhibition was later changed.

Mr. Harwit said it was "very important to face the history of your own country to narrow the gap of historical perceptions from others."

He was quoted as saying that "for democracy to work properly, every citizen must have access to accurate historical exhibitions. To have that access, we must be free from any political interference."



Children lay flowers in front of a cenotaph at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in prayer for the atomic bomb victims Wednesday, the 52nd anniversary of the bombing the city. About 45,000 people participated in the commemorating ceremony (Reuter photo).

Retreat of Oder River leaves trail of destruction in Germany

FRANKFURT AN DER ODER (R) — The swollen river Oder on Germany's eastern border retreated steadily Wednesday, leaving behind a vast trail of mud, dead fish and waterlogged homes.

South of Frankfurt An Der Oder, the area's largest city, water levels were falling rapidly and soldiers and relief workers cleared sandbags from streets and houses in several villages, a spokeswoman for the Flood Crisis Centre said.

But north of the city, around the village of Hohenwutzen, a critical section of dikes preventing the river from flooding the low-lying Oderbruch area were still under immense pressure because the river was retreating only very slowly.

In Ratzdorf, at the confluence of the Oder and Neisse rivers, where several homes have been waterlogged for weeks the water was receding by one centimetre per hour, the spokeswoman said.

"Water levels are falling fast but this is no reason to

tell people it's completely safe to return to their homes. The water pressure is so great the dike could still break," she said.

"It's calmer now. Now there is hope, but there is no euphoria because we can't say we've won the battle yet."

Local officials said soldiers and relief workers were continuing to monitor and secure dikes all along the river but that no new cracks had been found overnight.

They say it will take at least until Friday before they can tell hundreds of residents whose villages were flooded and the 4,500 evacuated as a precaution from Oderbruch, where no flooding has taken place, that it is safe to go home.

The Oder was swollen by the same rains that caused flooding in the Czech Republic and Poland last month, claiming more than 100 lives and causing billions of dollars' worth of damage.

Germany has escaped the worst of the floods, but

damage to homes, businesses and farms has been extensive and the stagnant water left in the wake of the retreating river has posed the threat of diseases.

Health authorities in the state of Brandenburg have carried out an extensive inoculation programme across the region to protect residents against jaundice and typhoid.

They have also warned the public about several danger spots with high concentrations of disease-carrying microbes.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl Tuesday pledged up to 500 million marks in federal government aid to the region along the Oder River, calling floods there in the past weeks the "worst natural disaster ever faced by newly-united Germany."

German Defence Minister Volker Ruehe, who was due to visit the crisis area along Germany's eastern border later in the day, has said some 10,000 troops involved in securing the dikes would stay on to join clean-up efforts.

China envoy in H. Kong assures no Beijing interference

HONG KONG (R) — A Chinese envoy said Wednesday that Beijing's Hong Kong watchdog body would change its role now that the former British colony was under Chinese rule and it would not meddle in local affairs.

Jiang Enzhu was speaking as he arrived to take up his job as director of the Xinhua News Agency Hong Kong branch. He told reporters that from now on Xinhua would work to help improve ties between the territory and the mainland.

"The role and duty of the Xinhua branch in Hong Kong will alter," he said. "The Xinhua branch in Hong Kong will not interfere in the affairs of the Special Administrative Region government," the 57-year-old diplomat said.

Hong Kong came to the end of 156 years of British colonial rule on June 30 and is now an autonomous capitalist region of China, running all its own affairs except defence and diplomacy.

"The Xinhua branch will keep contact with Hong Kong people to ensure ties between Hong Kong and mainland China will continue to improve," said Mr. Jiang, a former Chinese ambassador to London.

Next Monday Mr. Jiang will replace Xinhua Director Zhou Nan, a Communist Party hardliner who is retiring this week.

The Xinhua office, the Chinese Communist Party's Hong Kong base, acted as a watchdog and shadow government in the colonial era. Its deputy directors were like shadow ministers, tracking specific policy areas.

This role is likely to be greatly reduced now that Hong Kong is ruled by a China-backed government and has a Foreign Ministry branch office here in addition to Xinhua.

Xinhua also carried out "united front" work, which meant working to divide anti-Beijing political forces and to unite pro-Beijing, anti-colonial forces in the territory.

Mr. Jiang's arrival rounds off Beijing's installation of a new line-up of top Chinese officials in Hong Kong.

The central government has appointed diplomat Ma Yuzhen as Foreign Ministry commissioner here, and General Liu Zhenwu as commander of the People's Liberation Army garrison.

Australian landslide toll rises as Thredbo picks up pieces

THREDBO (AFP) — Two more bodies were found in the landslide debris here Wednesday raising the death toll to 15 as rescuers in their search for three people still missing.

The bodies of two men and a woman were located earlier Wednesday as forecast rain started to fall on this snow-clad mountain ski-resort on the seventh day of the search.

Ski instructor Stuart Diver, rescued with frostbitten toes Saturday after more than 60 hours trapped in the rubble, continued to make "excellent progress" in Canberra Hospital where a spokeswoman said his toes were no longer a problem.

But rescue coordinators admitted they had practically abandoned hope of finding more miraculous sur-

vivors. "We've got to be honest with one another and the chances of survival are going to be very minimal," ambulance Superintendent Bill Williams said.

The landslide swept down the mountainside into the Carinya Ski Lodge, forcing it on to another lodge, burying 19 people, mostly resort staff, beneath tonnes of concrete slabs, mud and rubble at midnight last Wednesday. A huge tarpaulin was erected to protect rescuers from the weather that worsened Wednesday, with snow forecast for Thursday raising fears of further slippage in unstable ground.

Mr. Williams said shifts would be shortened in the worsening conditions and crews would be reduced from five people to three. "We're now putting a limit

on it that each of the officers will only be in the field for one hour at a time and we will rotate the staff a lot more quickly because we have to look for warning signs of hypothermia," he added.

Police said rescuers were now digging towards a bedroom in which more missing people were expected to be found within a few hours.

"We are fairly confident that we know the location of these particular people," police Superintendent Paul Chaplin, told reporters.

But he said rescuers were battling gale-force winds and their safety was now the most important consideration.

The Thredbo community is preparing a marketing campaign to try to rescue what is regarded by New

South Wales tourism authorities as one of the state's most beautiful assets.

Chamber of Commerce President Ian Foster said local businesses including equipment-hire shops, lodges and caterers, had all been badly affected by the tragedy, but he hoped the downturn would be temporary.

One lodge owner said 40 per cent of his bookings had been cancelled following the disaster and some people had failed even to show up for transport to the accommodation centres.

But Tourism Authority General Manager Tony Thirwell said a range of people and organisations would work together to keep Thredbo and the snowy mountains viable as a major tourist attraction.

Romania floods kill 2, submerge crop land

BUCHAREST (R) — New heavy rains triggered floods throughout Romania Tuesday, killing two people, swamping wide stretches of farmland and threatening a predicted bumper grain harvest, local television said.

The new deaths near the big industrial city of Brasov, 160 kilometres north of Bucharest, brought to eight the death toll in two weeks of flooding and landslides.

The private Pro TV television station said one of the two victims drowned when floods swept away his horse-drawn cart. A second man was killed by floodwaters which caught him on a local road.

Television footage showed swollen streams bursting through the streets of Brasov and nearby towns and villages. People ambled in hip-deep water or wept

over the twisted beams and cracked walls of wrecked homes.

Floods had destroyed 16 per cent of the country's 2.38 million hectares under wheat and rye. Pro TV quoted Agriculture Ministry sources as saying.

It said floods had destroyed tens of thousands of hectares of grain crops in southern Romania, in the eastern Moldova region and in Bihor, on the western border with Hungary.

The government had expected a bumper wheat crop of about seven million tonnes, twice the amount of last year, and insisted that recent rains would have little effect. About 64 per cent of the crop has been collected.

Pro TV showed the Romanian stretch of the Danube River flooding for the

first time near the river ports of Braila and Galati, spilling over into wheat and maize crops.

Water engulfed a ferry terminal at Galati, near the border with Ukraine and Moldova, halting services.

The government rushed four billion Lei worth of emergency aid — medicine, clothes and building materials — to the Prahova area north of Bucharest, where landslides and flooding damaged more than 2,000 homes over the weekend.

No official estimate has been made of total damage. Although the extent of the flooding has been less dramatic than in Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic, Pro TV said the Romanian government had asked for emergency relief aid from the European Union and the United States.

British MP's suicide note accuses colleagues of smear campaign

LONDON (AFP) — A suicide note left by an MP from Britain's ruling Labour Party accused two of his colleagues of "bad mouthing" him, a press report said Wednesday. The Daily Mail said Gordon McMaster went to his death last week in the garage of his Scottish home cursing fellow Labour MP, Tommy Graham and Don Dixon, a Labour member of the House of Lords.

"I hope Don Dixon and Tommy Graham can live with themselves," McMas-

ter reportedly said in the typewritten note he left for his parents, Prime Minister Tony Blair and the Labour Party.

"I would rather be dead with my conscience than alive with theirs. I expect to go to heaven and I don't expect to see them there. But if I do, I hope it's in a dark alley."

"Even after I'm dead they will keep on bad-mouthing me," he added in the note which was found next to his body after he gassed himself. Mr. Dixon and Mr.

Graham have both firmly denied any involvement in spreading rumours that McMaster was gay and infected with the HIV virus.

Mr. Blair has ordered an inquiry into the claims allegedly made in the suicide note.

McMaster, MP for Paisley South in Glasgow, had been suffering from ME, the chronic fatigue syndrome, and had been depressed for some time, according to friends.

Cambodian parliament approves new first premier

PHNOM PENH (R) — Cambodia's National Assembly Wednesday approved the nomination of Foreign Minister Ung Huot as the country's new first prime minister in place of ousted Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

A total of 86 members of parliament voted in favour of the motion, four voted against, six abstained and there were three spoiled ballots, assembly officials said. A two-thirds majority, or 80 votes, were needed to pass the motion.

"I would like to declare that from now on his excellency Ung Huot will be the first prime minister," acting President of the National Assembly Loy Sim Cheang told the parliament.

Mr. Ung Huot told parliament he was delighted and honoured to have been elected first prime minister and said the main task of the government was to strengthen political, economic and social institutions.

"I am determined to try by all means to make the Kingdom of Cambodia a genuine state governed by the rule of law with strong political, legal, economic and social institutions," he told the assembly.

"The government economic and financial policies over the next few years will be geared towards consolidating macroeconomic stability and laying a solid



Cambodia's Foreign Minister Ung Huot stands in parliament after a secret ballot in the National Assembly approved his appointment as first prime minister Wednesday (Reuter photo).

foundation for sustained development," he said.

Members of Prince Ranariddh's FUNCINPEC party still in the country nominated Mr. Ung Huot to succeed the prince as co-premier

after Second Prime Minister Hun Sen ousted Prince Ranariddh on July 6. Mr. Hun Sen backed Mr. Ung Huot's nomination.

After taking sole power, Mr. Hun Sen said he wanted

to maintain his Cambodian People's Party's coalition with FUNCINPEC and that FUNCINPEC should select a new first prime minister.

Prince Ranariddh, who left Cambodia just before he was overthrown, has been calling for opposition to Mr. Hun Sen from abroad.

Mr. Ung Huot also promised to work closely with Mr. Hun Sen's CPP in preparing for elections scheduled for May.

"Bearing in mind bitter events during the past few years and, in particular the recent armed conflict, I would, therefore, like to reaffirm my determination to maintain peace, social security, safety and the happiness of our citizens," he said.

"I would like to pledge and reaffirm my firm determination to cooperate with all parties in Cambodia, in particular the Cambodian People's Party in organising free and fair elections," he said.

He called on all Cambodians to prevent threats, intimidation and killings in the election and said he would stand aside at that time.

"I now, solemnly promise before all Cambodian citizens that I will happily hand over the post of first prime minister to any eminent person who will receive the trust by the people in the universal election on May 23, 1998," he said.

Relatives' shock turns to anger over Guam crash

SEOUL (AFP) — Shock turned to anguish and anger as South Korean relatives tried to find out the fate of 254 honeymoon couples and tourists on KAL flight KE-801 that crashed Wednesday in Guam.

First reports from the Pacific island said only about 30 of the 231 passengers and 23 crew on the ill-fated Korean Air Lines Boeing 747-300 had survived.

But the more than 400 distraught, weeping relatives

who gathered at Seoul's Kimpo Airport became frantic as their wait dragged on.

The crash happened just after midnight in Seoul but there was still no firm news more than 17 hours later.

One Korean-American girl, tears streaming down her face, kept sobbing: "I want him to be here, alive, beside me."

In a special room at KAL's airport building, women collapsed on the floor and others milled around in confusion, crying names of loved ones, watching TV reports of the crash, or frantically asking KAL officials "give us names."

Some yelled and threw chairs, and mobbed KAL officials demanding a special flight to Guam to find out for themselves, forcing the airline to lay on two special flights to fly them to the crash site.

KAL officials at first urged the frantic crowd, many of them weeping hysterically, to send only one

family member per passenger.

But the relatives fought back and won a promise of two relatives each — or more than 400 people.

The two flights would take off around 1300 GMT, a KAL official said.

"I hope he will be alive," wept Chung Chan-in, 29, whose brother Chung Yoon was on the flight. "I haven't got any confirmation from KAL whether he is dead or not."

He said his 24-year-old brother was a student who had left for a vacation in Guam. Also on the flight was opposition MP Shin Ki-Ha and a party of some 25 opposition stalwarts from the southern city of Kwangju. An elderly woman, with her hands covering her face, burst into tears as she watched the crash site scenes on TV. She said her daughter, also a student, was aboard.

"This is outrageous," shouted Im Yong-Gyu, 38, whose sister, her husband and mother were on the flight headed for a vacation.

"Why did you come here," screamed another distraught man when ruling New Korea Party presidential hopeful Lee Hoi-Chang arrived to offer condolences.

The confusion was compounded as differing figures for the number of survivors — 30, 32, 61 and 55 — came from TV stations and officials.



A South Korean family whose relatives were on Korean Air Lines flight 801 break down into tears on hearing of the death of their loved ones at a support centre set up for grieving relatives by the airline in Seoul Wednesday (Reuters photo)



The wreckage of Korean Air Lines (KAL) flight 801 stands at the crash site in the early morning hours of Wednesday. The KAL jumbo jet crashed in the hilly jungle area about 5 kilometres south of Agaña International Airport on a scheduled flight from Seoul. More than 200 people died when the jet crashed and burst into flames after hitting an oil pipeline on the U.S. Pacific island early Wednesday but officials said as many as 30 passengers may have survived (Reuters photo)

Some accused KAL of deliberately withholding information of the identity of the survivors.

But one man was known to be safe.

Interviewed on KBS television from his hospital bed, 35-year-old Song Hyon-Sung, said he had thought the plane had landed and was taxiing when "there was a sudden bang and the plane started to tumble nose-down."

Mr. Song, who was sitting at the front of the plane, said he was the first to be rescued, but not until after a nightmare hour listening to

children he could not reach screaming for help.

"It was dark and raining, and there were the sounds of children screaming for help amid the sounds of explosions. I called out 'how many of you are there' and they replied 'four' but I couldn't get to them," Mr. Song said.

Officials said there were three infants and three children on the passenger manifest, one Japanese and 13 American nationals, most of Korean descent.

Nine people escaped when they did not show up for the ill-fated KAL flight.

The airport scenes were a painful reminder of two other KAL tragedies: The accidental shooting down of a KAL Boeing in 1983 when all 269 people aboard died, and the crash of a Seoul-bound Boeing 707 in the Bay of Bengal in 1987 which killed 115.

The 1987 disaster was attributed to a North Korean bomb. Throughout South Korea people stood silently in front of their TV sets as announcers droned the names on the list.

President Kim Young-Sam extended "deep regret and sorrow" to relatives of those

killed in the "indiscribably tragic crash." Phone lines into the country were jammed and the government cancelled all but essential business.

A group of KAL officials and a seven-member government delegation, along with more than 100 Korean journalists, arrived in Guam on a special KAL flight.

The delegation, led by Song Dae-Yong, an international aviation director at the Transport Ministry, also included aviation experts and government investigators who will probe the cause of the crash.

Pakistani government under fire over the state of law and order

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistan's opposition and the press Wednesday criticised the government for its "failure" to curb growing violence after 13 killings on a single day in sectarian unrest in the country's largest province.

The lawlessness is "growing by the day," opposition leader and former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said in a statement released by her party.

Ms. Bhutto, currently in London on a private visit, accused the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of "presiding over a situation of paralysis."

She said the conditions had "deteriorated" to the extent that mosques, public places, civil servants, police and even foreign missions "are not safe."

A hoax bomb call triggered alarm Tuesday at the British embassy here, leading to temporary evacuation of the building. The News Daily reported.

This was the third such incident in a week after similar calls made to the Dutch

and Thai missions, it said.

Official sources said a high-level law and order meeting chaired by Mr. Sharif here Tuesday approved unspecified new security measures.

Mr. Sharif, condemning the sectarian killings, asked officials to use all resources to combat terrorism, they said.

Eight Shiite Muslims were shot dead Monday at Shoretown in Punjab and five more, including Sunni Muslims, were killed elsewhere in the central province, where more than 100 have fallen victim to sectarian vendetta this year.

Around 400 people have been killed over the same period in Karachi, Pakistan's biggest city, in a wave of violence attributed by local officials to criminal mafia and factional strife.

"The state (Sindh, of which Karachi is capital) seems increasingly helpless in guaranteeing public peace and security," The News said in an editorial. It called for less "rhetoric" and more action such as

prosecution of arrested suspects, recovery of illegal weapons, effective intelligence role and greater effort to douse sectarian sentiment.

Another daily The Nation said "the sectarian war, which used to be mainly against religious scholars or activists at one point, has spread to those who just happen to belong one sect or another."

"The citizens' sense of insecurity had never been so acute," The Frontier Post said.

"The government is spending ever more public money on police and other law-enforcing bodies, but apparently it hasn't helped in pinning down the forces of fanaticism," the newspaper observed.

Syed Sajid Ali Naqvi, chief of Shiite political party, Tehreek-e-Jafria Pakistan, demanded that the Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif step down because of his "failure" to maintain law and order.

North Korea demands U.S. troops pullout from South Korea

TOKYO (AFP) — North Korea Wednesday demanded an unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea as a first step toward a durable peace on the Korean Peninsula.

The demand was made by North Korea's ruling Workers Party in a commentary hours after the two Koreas, the United States and China started the first day of preparatory peace talks in New York.

"Freeing the Korean Peninsula from foreign troops is the way of ensuring a durable peace and a main task to be fulfilled by 'four-way talks,'" the party newspaper Rodong Sinmun said.

The starving Stalinist state has been trying to forge better links with the United States and removing U.S. troops from South Korea is one of its top foreign relations priorities.

"If this issue is settled, other matters can be resolved between the north and the south of Korea, not by four parties," said the commentary, carried by Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency, monitored here.

"To withdraw all its troops unconditionally from South Korea and its vicinity is what the U.S. should do first of all at present for peace in the Korean Peninsula and for inter-Korean reconciliation," it said.

The commentary underlined that North Korea had proposed as "main items" at the four-way talks, the conclusion of a "peace agreement" between North Korea and the United States and the withdrawal of some 37,000 U.S. troops based in South Korea.

"It is due to the unreasonable position of the U.S. that the withdrawal of the U.S. troops has not yet been solved," the commentary said. "The U.S. has based the reason of its military presence in South Korea and its vicinity on the cold war. But the cold war has already been terminated."

Burmese junta torched 178 villages — Karen rebels

BANGKOK (AFP) — The Burmese military has torched 178 villages and killed 83 civilians in a bid to cut off support to the Karen National Union (KNU), the last major ethnic insurgency fighting Rangoon, the KNU said Wednesday.

Some 46,000 civilians have been left homeless or forced to relocate in four districts in Karen state and Pegu division in eastern Burma since junta forces launched a major offensive against the KNU in February to flush out the Karen resistance.

"The SLORC do forced relocations, they kill, they rape, they even burn the food supplies of villagers, to scare them, to make them obey," Mahn Sha, the KNU joint general secretary, told AFP by telephone from the Thai border.

"They want to put the people under their control and to cut off contact with the revolution," he said.

The SLORC — or the State Law and Order Restoration Council — is the official name of the Burmese junta.

In a press release issued Wednesday, the Karen rebels said the tolls would be much higher if the "onslaught of SLORC" in six other districts was added.

The rebels' contentions could not be independently confirmed.

Mr. Mahn Sha said that KNU guerrillas — massively outnumbered by government forces — were keeping up resistance in the KNU's various "brigade areas," using mobile units of troops in hit-and-run attacks.

SLORC troops dislodged the KNU from its last enclaves in eastern and southern Burma in the offensive launched in February.

Over 10,000 Karens escaped to Thailand, bringing to over 90,000 the numbers

of Karens sheltering in camps along the Thai border.

The KNU, which until recent years held swathes of territory along the frontier, has been battling the central government in Rangoon for nearly 50 years.

The group has refused to reach a ceasefire agreement with the SLORC, which has persuaded 15 other insurgencies to enter the "legal fold" through a combination of military pressure and promised development assistance.

As the KNU released its figures of civilians effected by the SLORC's bid to stifle resistance, the official press in Rangoon Wednesday hailed the completion of a new bridge in Karen state.

Over 40,000 people had recently witnessed the commissioning of the bridge over the Salween River near Pa An by SLORC chief senior General Than Shwe, the New Light of Myanmar

daily said in an editorial defying the use of civilian labour in state infrastructure projects.

In some cases it was necessary for the army and people to be employed to complete such projects "as soon as possible," it said.

Burma, which was last month welcomed into the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) despite objections from Western nations critical of the junta's human rights record, defends its use of civilian "labour contributions."

The New Light editorial said that people employed in such projects could "smile after accomplishing a major task."

"The people of Kayin (Karen) state ... are happy not only for their well-being but also for the posterity of the state," the editorial concluded.

Indian PM candidate copies Gandhi in bid to revive Congress Party

NEW DELHI (AFP) — One of India's key political leaders took a leaf out of Mahatma Gandhi's book here Wednesday as he tried to breathe new life into the country's oldest party.

Sitaram Kesri, head of the Congress Party and a key powerbroker in New Delhi, bought a second-class rail ticket as he left the Indian capital by train on his way to a national party convention in Calcutta.

Gandhi, who led India's struggle for independence in 1947, always travelled second class to demonstrate his solidarity with India's masses.

Would-be Prime Minister Kesri's Gesture has been ridiculed by commentators as meaningless as he tries to revive the 112-year-old Congress.

The party is currently wracked by corruption scandals and has been steadily losing influence after ruling India for more than four decades.

But Priya Ranjan Dasgupta, a former minister and current Congress mem-

ber of parliament, said the party, which boasts such former prime ministers as Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, could learn from the past.

"The party is trying to restore the value based politics of the old days," he said.

Speaking from Calcutta, he said: "We have diverted from the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. We are rectifying this now ... We are making a break with the recent past."

The Congress, with 140 out of 545 seats in parliament, currently controls the fate of India's minority coalition government.

But it has been steadily losing its share of the national vote over the past two decades as numerous new regional parties have emerged. Its 48 per cent share of the vote in 1984 dipped to below 30 per cent in last year's polls.

That made it the country's second largest party behind the Hindu Nationalists.

Mr. Dasgupta, however,

argued that India needed a strong Congress to avoid weak coalition governments.

"The present political situation is very clear. The government can't hold the country together," he said.

"The Congress will come back to power because people have realised that, given the diversity of India, it is the only national party which will work in India. The others are regional or religious groupings."

Mr. Kesri, 77, made a bid to become prime minister in April by withdrawing support from the United Front. But he renewed his backing after failing to win support for his own proposed coalition.

He has since pledged to continue backing Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's fragile coalition for another 12 months.

The Congress convention, the first since 1992, is expected to draft a series of far-reaching policy resolutions.

New Mir crew in orbit; old team making repairs

MOSCOW (R) — Two relief cosmonauts were orbiting the Earth Wednesday gradually aligning themselves with the ailing Mir space station where they plan to make repairs that will determine the ship's future.

"Everything is proceeding normally," mission control spokesman Valery Lyndin said Wednesday morning. "The new crew are already on their 11th orbit around Earth."

As commander Anatoly Solovoyov and flight engineer, Pavel Vinogradov prepared for their Thursday rendezvous with Mir at 1703 GMT after their Tuesday launch, the current crew continued repairs on the Elektron Oxygen generating system that has not worked since last week.

NASA spokeswoman,

Kathleen Maliga said.

On board Mir the crew of two Russians and one American were using solid fuel oxygen generators called "candles" as they failed to restart the newer Elektron on board.

It failed to work last week and by midday Wednesday they had still not resolved the problem, which NASA believes is caused by a faulty pressure regulator, officials said.

Mir's older back-up oxygen generator is not available for use because it is located in the Kvant-2 module, which the crew powered down to save energy after the space station collided with its supply ship on June 25, causing a major loss of power.

At 1144 GMT Wednesday the Mir crew of Commander Vasily Tsibilyev, Engi-

neer Alexander Lazutkin and British-born U.S. Physicist, Michael Foale were planning to undo their Progress cargo ship to make room for the new crew.

The new crew will reconnect with Progress after Commander Tsibilyev and Mr. Lazutkin return to Earth on August 14 after 185 days in space.

"The Mir crew is making preparations to meet the new crew and to depart. These are their two main tasks today," Ms. Lyndin said.

Mr. Solovoyov, 49, one of Russia's most experienced cosmonauts with a total of 456 days in space, and space newcomer Mr. Vinogradov, 43, will undertake vital repairs on the Mir soon after their arrival.

On August 20, the two men, with Mr. Vinogradov

leading the way, will open the hatch to the dark, airless Spektr module which was damaged in the June 25 accident and attempt to reconnect cables that link up to Spektr's solar panels.

If Mr. Solovoyov and Mr. Vinogradov succeed in the task, then they can power up the Kvant-2 again and use its oxygen system and other equipment.

Yet the job is risky. Space officials say the module, which is now sealed off from the rest of Mir, could contain dangerous floating chemicals or debris. A puncture in a space suit could mean a swift death.

If they fail to repressurise the node module leading to Spektr after they install the new hatch, they would have to abandon ship.

Mars Pathfinder strolls through Rock Garden

PASADENA (R) — The Mars Rover awakened from a deep sleep Tuesday and prepared to celebrate the first day of its extended mission on the Red Planet by taking a stroll through an area known as the Rock Garden.

The solar batteries aboard the Mars Pathfinder mission's Sagan Lander and Sojourner Rover had been shut down for more than 24 hours to allow them to be

recharged by the sun's rays. Mission Commander Carl Steiner said the recharging procedure worked perfectly and the two craft were awakened from their hibernation by a timing device, which he likened to an alarm clock, on board the lander.

The little six-wheeled Mars buggy, which is about the size of a microwave oven, had its batteries recharged while it "slept" in

an area dubbed Mermaid Dunes. It was scheduled to start rumbling across the Martian surface on Tuesday night — about midday on Mars — with the Rock Garden as its destination.

Engineers at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena have sent commands to the Sojourner to carry out a number of scientific experiments, including performing wheelies to kick up the powder-fine Martian dust

and expose the sublayer of soil beneath for examination.

JPL spokeswoman Diane Ainsworth said the Pathfinder crew was extremely pleased to be going into the extended mission, which she said had indefinite funding from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and would last until "the wheels drop off the Rover."

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The quality of life

AN ENDLESS debate can go on without agreeing on whether the Jordanian economy is doing well or not and how to describe the business situation and climate especially when traders and industrialists are complaining of a slowdown or a recession in the market and the public at large moans under the high cost of living, low purchasing power and limited income.

On the one hand, economists and analysts hail the reduction in the deficits of the budget and the balance of payments and point to higher exports, large inflow of investments, better growth and monetary stability. On the other hand, the people decry high unemployment, widening poverty, falling standards of living, high cost of credit and the fast erosion of the middle class.

The intention of this analysis is really not to find a definition or a word to describe the economic conditions prevailing in Jordan at present because the fact remains that in terms of scientific indicators the Kingdom is doing very well. Even international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund do certify to the country's high and remarkable achievements.

But also the fact remains that civil servants, military personnel, limited and low-income groups and middle class families, which all form a majority of the population of Jordan, are not seeing the benefits and fruits of the economic indicators. Could it be that these indicators are not high enough to reach the masses down below?

The question may sound odd but surprisingly the answer could be a "big yes." According to Manmohan Singh, a well-respected economist and a former finance minister who was the architect of sweeping reforms in India, small growth does not trickle down and for a country to tackle poverty it should target high growth.

The Indian expert sheds light and indirectly gives an answer to our dilemma in Jordan of whether to believe the government that says things are going so well when the people see things going so bad.

Mr. Singh says: The economy is not an end in itself — it is a matter of improving the quality of life. As such, the Indian expert sends two important messages, the first of which underlines the need to better the people's living conditions in order to prove and demonstrate the reality of the state figures and data. The second message highlights the importance of high growth and, indirectly, requests the poor to be patient to allow such a growth to trickle some benefits to them.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Aswaq reflected on the reported corruption cases in the Palestine self rule areas which led to the resignation of most of the cabinet ministers. Corruption cannot be eradicated by mere resignation of ministers who, in their majority, believe that they will be rejected by President Arafat, said Rashid Hassan. The writer said a drastic remedy for the situation should not be dealt with through resignations but through thorough investigations, with the judiciary wielding absolute power to pass verdicts against the culprits who are reported to have mismanaged 40 per cent of the overall budget. Fair and serious investigation into the corruption cases is necessary, otherwise frustration among the Palestinians will increase and other Palestinian officials could be tempted to act and behave indifferently in the future, warned the writer. He said that the Palestinians have suffered a great deal and continue to do so as they continue to struggle for freedom, and therefore, the corruption issue should be dealt with promptly and drastically. The writer said that corruption among the ministers means mocking and disregarding the sufferings of the widows, the orphans and the destitute among the Palestinian people, something which encourages the Israelis to disregard the people's struggle for freedom.

A WRITER for Al Dustour discussed the boycott of the 1997 elections by political parties, calling on the public to disregard the boycott call and to exercise their constitutional rights and participate in the coming elections. The six political parties who made it a condition that the government rescind temporary laws for their participation in the elections realise too well that the government cannot accept their demand and therefore they are bound to refrain from voting in November, noted Nazih Qousus. He said although these parties have the right to express their position, they have no power to control the masses and cannot prevent people from going to the polls. Apart from the Islamists, the other parties have no popular base and so their decisions are most likely to be ignored by the public. The writer said that people are not inclined to listen to orders but would readily respond to political parties if they provided clear political, economic and social programmes to address the chronic problems facing the country.

View from Academia

Is the cynics' vision of peace coming true?

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

NOT LONG ago (though it seems ages ago now), when the peace process was in full swing (essentially during the short-lived Israeli Labour reign), cynics (and opponents of peace) on the Arab side used to say (and we peace advocates — triumphant and confident then, heartbroken and disillusioned now — used to laugh at their line of thinking): Israel wants to bring Arafat and his followers to a small piece of Palestinian land with the intention of making him and them their policemen. Their job, the cynics went on, is to help Israel control and eliminate what it calls "terrorists" and what it terms "violence." There will be no Palestinian homeland; what Israel is after is a trivial Palestinian entity whose sole job is to serve Israel's needs, wants, wishes and whims. Gaza/Jericho is first and last.

Well, Arafat got more than Jericho and Gaza, a little more. But the way the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is being treated by the Israeli government today brings the vision of the cynics (ludicrous though it may have seemed at one point) closer to sense and credibility than it has ever been.

When the double suicide bombing took place in Jerusalem last week, Benjamin Netanyahu was quick to hold Arafat and the PNA directly responsible. How did he justify it? Well, he and the PNA, Netanyahu would say, have not done enough to curb and eliminate the "terrorists" and "perpetrators" of violence — conveniently forgetting that the attitude, actions and practices of the Israeli government itself as well as the provocative practices of the settlers, provocation, promotion and escalation of recent acts of violence, acts and practices which have forced us head on into one of the gloomiest and bloodiest eras of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Some of the old cynics among us (who have been waiting for such an opportunity to rub their point in and who have been thriving since the advent of the present Israeli government and the resulting disruption and stalemate in the peace process) were quick to make the best of the moment: Did not we tell you this? Did not we say that Oslo did not mean peace; it meant that Israel wanted someone to do the dirty job for it. And who could do it better than the Palestinians? Look at what the Israeli premier is saying. Has he not made it crystal clear that

Arafat and the PNA are his policemen? Otherwise, what does he mean by telling them: "You have not done enough."

Somewhat out of context, cruel and offensive though such discourse may seem, it is beginning to look attractive and to carry weight. Is not this, after all, say the more intelligent cynics, what Netanyahu's security theory is all, has been all, about from the very beginning? You see, the cat is out of the bag, and it all fits. Since his coming to power, Netanyahu has been saying nothing but security. What does he mean by security? The security of Israel, of course. For the sake of Israel's security, Israel needs to keep (as the Israeli premier said, with the loudest voice and the most dramatic tone possible, a few weeks ago) more than fifty per cent of the occupied Palestinian territory and all of Jerusalem. It also needs to build more settlements in Palestinian land, to destroy more Palestinian homes and to reduce the Palestinian homeland to a strip of territory the sole objective of whose governing body is the protection of Israel's security, and the sole preoccupation of its rulers is the elimination of "terrorism" and "violence." Under such peculiar, perverse vision, Arafat and the PNA are no more than soldiers (mercenary soldiers) in Israel's police force. Very smart and very creative.

The violence that has taken place recently, the shedding of Palestinian and Israeli blood is tragic. What is more tragic, however, is the destruction of the hopes which we once pinned on the peace process, the gloom that is beginning to prevail. Our worst nightmares are coming, may have come, true. Thanks to the succession of recent developments (essentially since the advent of the Likud), the cynics, rejectionists and enemies of peace are rejoicing. They are having a good time making fun of us, of the hopes that once were. Where is the Middle East as an oasis of freedom, liberty, safety, cooperation, honourable competition, equality, respect, civility, understanding, love, living and letting live? Nay, where is mutual confidence and peace partnership? All seems to have vanished.

We have, for a long time, felt that the enemies of peace are a small minority, that the majority will prevail. The advocates of peace, we have for a long time felt, far outnumber those who want to subvert peace. As long as the

cynics, rejectionists and enemies of peace are on the outside, the peace process is safe — slow, painful, complicated, but safe, healthy and eventually fruitful. Today, we are not sure, not as confident as we used to.

For a long time, since the advent of the Likud to power, people have been trying to find an answer to the puzzling question of whether the Israeli premier, who is spearheading Israel's present politics, is a lamb in a wolf's skin or a wolf in a wolf's skin. Peace advocates have been hoping that the former would be true — i.e., that Netanyahu wants peace but that he needs time to convince the hawks, the wolves, the extremists, the rejectionists and the war lords of the virtue and value of peace.

The long succession of developments is strongly indicating (and we hope this will be proven wrong) that the latter, not the former, is true. The cat is out of the bag, again (as far as one can tell and as the cynics are constantly reminding us). Isn't it? If this hypothesis turns out to be true (i.e., that the Israeli premier is a wolf in a wolf's skin), there is real bad news for all — Arabs and Israelis — for the peace process is in real danger. If he turns out to be what is being said about him, what the succession of present events is pointing to and what his own rhetoric is suggesting, then the danger to peace lies in the fact that the rejectionists and enemies of peace are gnawing at and subverting the peace process from within.

This is the real danger; this is the real tragedy. The only one at this point in time who can prove this hypothesis wrong is no other than the Israeli premier himself. If he is bent on making peace (as he keeps repeating) and if he is keeping his side of the bargain (as he keeps insisting), then he has to show this to us in concrete steps, not in words. Take off your mask, and let us see what is under it. Come out into the light of day. If you truly mean peace, then prove it. This is the time to do it.

We hope the mediation efforts, especially as epitomised in the Crown Prince's visit to Israel and in the Israeli premier's intended visit to Jordan and meeting with His Majesty the King, will bring about a true change of heart on part of the present Israeli government. It is not too late to set the record straight and prove the sceptics and cynics wrong.

Peace will take more than just saying 'no' to the terrorists

By Flora Lewis

PARIS — The double suicide explosion in Jerusalem's central market has been the worst setback to hopes for peace since the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. But for the last year the fading "peace process" has been more illusion than action.

Whatever their real intentions may be, and they much mistrust each other, neither Benjamin Netanyahu nor Yasser Arafat any longer seems really capable of delivering on the goal. Both have to worry about their extremists and try, one way or another, to placate them.

But they only succeed in emboldening the intransigent and disheartening those who do understand that peace has to mean compromise.

Once again, world leaders proclaim that the "enemies of peace" who

deliberately use terrorism or provocation to make compromise impossible must not be allowed to win. Of course, but it isn't enough just to say "no," and there have been no initiatives to counter them.

Making what has become the conventional condemnation of the bombers, who took great care to inflict maximum casualties, Mr. Arafat said their act was also "bad for Palestinians." That is certainly true.

His own people are deeply disappointed with the meagre results he has brought them, not only because of the very limited gains of autonomy but because of his own regime.

Palestinian critics estimate that about half of the foreign aid intended to boost their barely existent economy has been siphoned off. They have called on him to fire his cabinet and start over. The press has been cen-

sored, and one widely respected Palestinian journalist was arrested for broadcasting on a small, unofficial station the actual proceedings of the elected parliament. He was released after an international protest, but there is no sense that the "Authority," as Israelis call what the Palestinians consider their government, is about to become democratic. Mr. Arafat has established half a dozen different police and security forces, responsible to him but often more competitive than coordinated, to prevent the emergence of a rival power.

It is questionable whether he could, as Mr. Netanyahu demands, fully suppress the terrorists, who have links with outside forces and a long experience of acquiring clandestine skills. That is the wages of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) own history.

It would probably require a repressive police state to the extent that most Palestinians would come to hate their regime as much as they hate the Israelis. That could not be the way to coexist peacefully.

Mr. Netanyahu has done nothing to help the PLO encourage its own peace supporters. Closing off not only Israel proper, so that Palestinians cannot work there, but also transit between Gaza and the various enclaves on the West Bank ensures economic doldrums.

There has still been no advance on Israeli permission to open an airport and build a port at Gaza, needed for trade. That was to have been discussed in the next round of negotiations, now cancelled, and no promises were made.

Leak of an Israeli plan to include only some 30 per cent of occupied territory in a new proposal for a definitive solution diminished what hope

existed that Mr. Netanyahu had any thought of ceding a viable state to the Palestinians. "They will have to lower their expectations," a senior Israeli official, who was nonetheless a supporter of Mr. Rabin, said of the new plan. Building in Jerusalem only exacerbates despair.

When Mr. Rabin and Mr. Arafat sealed the Oslo agreement with a White House handshake, unleashing much euphoria, the question was asked whether the peace process had become irreversible. The answer then was "yes and no." It still is.

Now peace looks far out of reach, but neither can the situation go back to where it was when the seven-year stone-throwing intifada was ended. Now the Palestinians also have arms. They cannot withdraw recognition of Israel, but they cannot be pacified without a real surge of hope.

What is to be done? Clearly mumbles about renewing the peace process are no solution. There is no prospect of a breakthrough that would make a real difference. Oslo came after the frustrations of the intifada on the Israeli side and the Gulf war on the Palestinian side. What kind of major frustrations would it take to convince both sides to make a serious try for peace again?

The United States is the only outside power that still has some influence, but it is reluctant to use it. It would matter if the American Jewish community urged President Bill Clinton to tell Prime Minister Netanyahu that he, too, must make concessions. But the terrorism makes that all the more unlikely. And it settles nothing. The prospects are bleak.

International Herald Tribune

'By distorting facts myth-mongers are endangering much more than just monetary union'

By Helmut Schmidt

HAMBURG — In the debate over the common European currency, three myths are bandied about that confuse citizens and endanger what can be a decisive step towards the political integration of Europe.

The criteria are rigid and the date of introduction is flexible. Only those who have not read the Maastricht Treaty can think that. However, confusing the treaty language in other areas, it is quite clear as to the date and deficit criteria for the common currency. The third stage of monetary union "shall start" on Jan. 1, 1999, it says. And if a state does not meet the criteria, account will be taken of "all other relevant factors, including the medium-term economic and budgetary position" of states.

The treaty thus says precisely the opposite of what the mythmakers claim. The date is rigid but the deficit criteria are flexible.

The euro will lack stability. That would please some in the union, but others, in particular quite a few inflation-fixated

Germans, are frightened by such predictions. But the myth reflects a lack of understanding or a deliberate distortion by those promulgating it.

There are two aspects of currency stability: external, in relation to other currencies, and internal, in relation to inflation. It is important to look at both.

The euro will be as stable as any currency managed by an independent, inflation-conscious central bank. The new European central bank will be no less independent of political interference than the Bundesbank or the Banque de France. It will thus be well equipped to fight off inflationary pressures, if need be by raising interest rates.

The bank is explicitly barred from providing credits to fund the budget deficits of member states. If one of them spends more than it earns, it will have to borrow from the capital markets, and in case of excessive borrowing will have to pay higher interest rates, thus punishing itself.

Because the new central bank will replace all the national central banks,

including those which currently do not have full independence, currency stability on the internal markets will increase, not decrease with the euro.

The euro's external stability, vis-à-vis other major currencies, will be greater than the Deutsche mark's has hitherto been, due to the great volume of the new currency.

German products became so expensive as to lose competitive edge. Germany's high unemployment rate today is not least the result of that misguided policy.

Stability neither implies nor requires the same deplorable fate. It will be a hard currency all right, but not one

whose external value can be manipulated easily by speculators in the financial markets or by political decisions in Washington or Tokyo. Europe is not ripe for

"Nor is it likely that countries which fail to reach rigidly (and wrongly) interpreted deficit criteria by early 1998 will be more successful in two or three years' time. The pressure to achieve convergence would be lost. What was hitherto a precise, disciplining objective would turn into a vague, non-committal vision."

In the past three decades currencies have fluctuated incessantly, with the mark's rate of exchange, thanks to Bundesbank rigidity, being pushed up to the point where

the euro, so let's postpone the date. This demand is based on the two preceding myths. It would require amendment of a treaty formally ratified by all the union's parliaments. No less important, it is a recipe for more currency chaos and for more European unemployment.

Postponing the entry date would remove all control from governments and central banks and hand it over to international currency speculation. The result would be a hefty increase in the exchange rate of the Deutsche mark as well as heavy speculation, particularly against Southern European currencies.

Unemployment would increase everywhere in the Union, further undermining Germany's export competitiveness and, in the countries trying to fight erosion of their currencies, pushing interest rates up and investment down.

Nor is it likely that countries which fail to reach rigidly (and wrongly) interpreted deficit criteria by early 1998 will be more successful in two or three years' time. The pressure to achieve convergence would be lost.

The writer, German Chancellor from 1974 to 1982, is now publisher of the weekly Die Zeit. The article above is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

What was hitherto a precise, disciplining objective would turn into a vague, non-committal vision.

Postponement would amount to nothing less than abrogation of the common European currency.

That would deal a possibly fatal blow to the great project of Europe's integration, the only concept in Europe's long history of conflict which offers the prospect of common security and prosperity to all its countries.

The European Union is still a very young and fragile creature. It can be destroyed by national egotism as well as by international upheavals. The move towards the common currency is so important because it will make the union more immune to such a fate.

Myth-mongers, beware. By distorting the facts you are endangering much more than just monetary union.

The writer, German Chancellor from 1974 to 1982, is now publisher of the weekly Die Zeit. The article above is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

Music is a

Choo

Choo

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Society on the Move

The 'open door' policy - a morale booster

It is no secret that Naomi Sukkar commands respect from all 551 cabin crew personnel of Royal Jordanian. That, we all know, is certainly no small achievement. The assistant vice president of Inflight Services for the national airline has reached retirement and is off to the U.K. today for a long deserved holiday. Mrs. Sukkar, who hails from North Wales, worked for five other airlines before she came to Jordan in 1965 to join the fledgling new ranks of Alia, as RJ was then called. She later married, had a family and left the airline. Three years ago management brought her back to take charge of the front-line staff that play a major role in guaranteeing RJ passengers' security and comfort on board the airline's flights. Mrs. Sukkar's 'open-door' policy helped lift the morale of the cabin crew, which when she returned was said to be at an all-time low. Her strategy was to keep communicating with the entire team in large meetings down to one-to-one personal exchanges, because with years of experience she knew full well the gamut of problems faced by inflight crew, from emergency landings to the passenger from hell. The result was a more dedicated staff of cabin crew who knew their suggestions, complaints and opinions would be considered because Mrs. Sukkar was 'working for them.' At a surprise presentation last week, Mrs. Sukkar was applauded by her staff who in a letter to her said, that above all, this AVP gave the cabin crew self-esteem. RJ President Nader Dahabi paid tribute to Mrs. Sukkar as well, praising her energy, productivity, steadfastness and perseverance. RJ Management has not yet named a successor to Mrs. Sukkar, and in the meantime, her deputy, Mahmoud Zereini, who was director of Standards and Practices at the Inflight Department, has been named acting AVP.

TA-TA TORONTO: Expectations of RJ closures of certain routes brought a nearly frantic letter to the editors of both Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times from Hani Amrashed Barghouti, a resident of Toronto, Canada. Al Ra'i chose to print Mr. Barghouti's letter which said that the closure of RJ Toronto would be a tragedy for many Jordanians living in Canada. Well RJ Public Relations Executive Assistant Munib Toukan responded saying RJ was looking seriously at its sources of profits and losses, and determined that Canada was excess baggage. The closures of lines are expected to be few but significant enough to help cut costs. So Mr. Barghouti and his fellow passengers Amman-bound from Canada will just have to go the distance to either RJ's Chicago or New York stations if they want to continue to fly with the crown.

ON THE MARK: News, again in the airline industry, is that a new manager of British Airways in Amman has been appointed. He is Mark Hodson, who officially starts his job today. Mr. Hodson has actually been in Jordan for the last year working as training director in the BA sales department. British Airways was the second foreign airline to resume flights to Jordan after several airlines halted their routes to Amman following the Gulf War. KLM returned first. Mr. Hodson succeeds Fiona Hamilton, who after two years in Jordan heads for the Czech Republic to be come BA Manager in Prague.

WAKE UP CALL: Turning to the tourism industry, it has been nearly 10 years since the Jordanian Hotel Association ran an election for a president. Sources tell us that elections should have been held every three years, but that the overseeing ministry let procedures fall between the cracks. Anyway, last Monday it was a race between Dr. Nazih Dabbas, general manager of the Gateway Hotel near the Queen Alia International Airport, and Michel Nazal of the famous Nazal family, said to be the originators of tourist facilities in the Kingdom. Mr. Nazal, who was the incumbent president, kept his seat and an eight-member board was elected. Reports that the battle was between two camps, the private sector interests vs. the hotels of public sector, were deemed nonsense as both presidential contenders had supporters from the private sector, besides the fact that most public sector hotels are going commercial. The

question now, say hospitality industry watchers, is with all the hotels sprouting up around the Kingdom, whether Mr. Nazal will have what it takes to liven things up at the association.

CAMERA BUFFS LISTEN UP: UNESCO, AGFA and Lufthansa are organising a photo competition to mark the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Here in Jordan, two sites are listed among the 506 sites on the World Heritage List. They are the ancient city of Petra and the Qasr Amra, the hunting lodge of the caliphs of the Umayyad period. Organisers say of the 350 prizes to be given away to the winners, the grand prize is a round-the-world trip for two with visits to the cultural capitals on three continents. They also expect an influx of professional and amateur photographers searching for the right light in the Petra and Qasr Amra environs. The deadline for entry to the contest is October 1. Details may be obtained from Dr. Abdulqader Atrash, director of the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation in Amman and from Futeh Tiele, the AGFA representative in Amman and at AGFA sales offices in major five-star hotels.

DISPLAY IN L.A. The Arab-American Press Club, based in Los Angeles, is hosting its first annual 'Arab-American Book Fair at the University of California (UCLA) on October 2. Exhibits will display books and publications in English on the Arab World on various topics, and activities will include a panel discussion with renowned American and Arab writers and publishers. Guild President Joseph Haiek is urging interest Jordanian and other Arab publishers and distributors of English books on the Arab World to participate in the fair. The Arab-American Press Guild was founded in 1985 to serve Arab-American journalists, coordinate press related information with the Arab press, and assist the Arab American community in its press and media needs. For information contact the guild at Fax (818) 246-1936; E-mail: newscirc@pacbell.net or write to P.O. Box 291250, Los Angeles, CA 90028, U.S.A.

Jennifer Hamarneh



To refuge or not to refuge, this is the question!

WITH THE establishment of numerous educational institutions, it is evident that Jordan will become a regional educational centre, just like the building of so many hospitals turned us into the emergency ward of the Middle East. Why lie? We've always been the ambulance complete with shrieking sirens, emergency room and the ICU too!

But what is it that we would teach that we are better at than all others? How could we insure that we will not face fierce competition from other educational centres in the region and worldwide? In other words, whatever we should teach, we'd better be authorities on.

Even though I could think of a few sciences we have mastered including but not limited to calorie free rhetoric, all digestible manner, how to survive on fantasy alone, thirst building beverages, American conspiracy asserting, Lebanese TV vegetating, the art of teaching one's wife a lesson, and slipping 'where are your papers' police road traps, one science we've achieved a doctorate at, and which could turn out to be our most longed for oil field, is the science of refusing.

Over the years not lacking in romantic action, we have become experts on everything that has to do with refugees. Not only can we receive them, philosophise about them, handle them, put them on the back or head, cater to their needs and export them all over the world, but we also so genuinely relate to them that it has become very difficult to determine who is a refugee in this country and who is not, if it weren't for a few ounces of 'state of mind' and 49 kilos of unexplainable urge to pack-up and leave, similar to that depicted in the American movie which established the timeless slogan 'E.T. Go Home' said with the finger pointed upwards.

Actually, if it wasn't for our genius successive governments which never recognised refugees as aliens, yet kept good documentation, and the question of 'where is your city of origin' coupled with 'what's your mother's name' (which is equivalent to the Social Security Number system in the states), Israel wouldn't know how to take back the dispossessed or pay them compensation. Coming to think about it, Israel should be paying us compensation for keeping our records straight, which we can claim has bloated our bureaucracy.

Refusing, as a total science, could open up opportunities for all Jordanian industries including falafel shops. Not only can we teach it academically at universities or through simple crash courses in 'leadership' offered by our diplomacy institutes, we can also offer practical refusing services to both the countries creating refugees and the refugees themselves.

First of all, we can take any country that plans to occupy any other country, or parts thereof, through a step-by-step 'how to do it right' walk in return for cash or solid promises and good intentions. Even though we do not have the experience of creating refugees ourselves, we can prove to our customers that we have learned from the experiences of others without a drop of sweat. If we model our consultation services after Israeli, Serb/Croatian, Kuwaiti or United Nations Sanctions Committee styles, we can offer a money back guarantee on results.

At the same time, we would horizontally offer our hospitality services to the refugees themselves on a short, medium and long term basis, where not only will we assure them that UNRWA will start them off in business with bales of sugar and rice, but we can also teach them how to be good refugees, or be shipped to Lebanon.

To insure that our customers don't feel patronised, we can appoint our own refugees as their teachers and designate the Passport Department in Jabal Amman, where refugees can line up for travel documents issued the same day, as an instructors hiring outlet, which will make the old and new feel equal in rights and duties, whatever their origins may be. If this is too complicated to follow, it is because it pertains to equality, a notion that could not be achieved in the socialist bloc of jeans seekers or modern day America, but we managed to do it here!

Back to our innovative economical development programme that will raise our standard of living while allowing the whole world to feel sorry for us. Since UNRWA is in financial trouble, we can invest into our future by purchasing the relief agency as is: complete with all the fancy cars driving around towns in blue licence plates. Coming to think about it, the U.N. may give us UNRWA for free or pay us well to take it over!

Why not? This would put our foot in many Third World countries, bestow on our business international credibility, and by owning a chunk of the U.N., allow the U.S. to veto our decisions right and left, which in turn will make us popular in Cuba, China and France.

I know, you're probably thinking 'as if we need to own a chunk of the U.N. to achieve that!', but at least we will now be able to blame it on collateral.

To market our services worldwide, we will need a motto that is better than that of Royal Jordanian, and proof of my theory is that most Jordanians can't recall their motto, mind you foreigners! Without getting into an argument on whether our national airline is a business or charity, I suggest the following motto that would ring a bell with people of all levels of education: 'Organised Refusing Is Not A Crime, Whatever Your Religion Is.'

To solve RJ's financial problems, since we've figured a way out for UNRWA, they can capitalise on our project by changing their motto to read: 'About RJ, Refugees Go Home' or equivalently, 'When You Fly With Us, You Are Automatically Compensated.'

What remains to be figured out is if Netanyahu knocks our door as a customer, would it be considered a form of normalisation to do business with Likud Incorporated?

Music is all Greek to the nightclubbers of Athens

By Catherine Bolard
Agence France Presse
ATHENS — Rock, rap or Techno music are a thing of the past in the nightclubs of Athens, Saloonika and Mykonos; if it's not Greek no one wants to know. "It all began about five years ago, when disc-jockeys of the fashionable night-spots began programming ten minutes of local numbers," said Nikos Tsalakos, editor of Athinorama, the main guide to Greek nightlife.

"The customers liked it, the ten minutes were extended, and now Greek music dominates."

This summer bars and discos specialising in Greek music are the in-place to be. Their collective name of Hellinadika used almost to be an insult, but now features strongly in advertising, and even the major rock and roll centres of Athens are providing facilities.

At spots like the Kinito in Athens or the Vareladiko in the port of Mykonos thou-

sands of youngsters cram themselves in well after midnight to be deafened by a mixture of the hits of Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis and the latest "Graeco-pop" numbers of popular singers Anna Vissi, Kaiti Garbi and Notis Sfakianakis.

In miniskirts and minute psychedelic tops, girls perform a local belly-dance called the Tsifteteli on the tables or whirl the boys round in a traditional syro. Choruses are belted out by

the whole audience in this bizarre cross between a rave party and a village folk festival. Haris Kaloeropoulos, a well-known chronicler of the local nightclub scene, says the new fashion has liberated the Greeks, removing any guilt about going out on the town.

The relatively new phenomenon of nightclubbing, imported from Western Europe in the 1970's, is considered respectable if mixed with national culture.

Efi Bourou, disc-jockey at

the radio, the first Athenian bar to go 100 per cent Greek three years ago, says there is also a desire to affirm national identity, amid all the upheavals in the Balkan countries to the north.

"We need to enjoy ourselves and let our hair down in a purely Greek fashion, which allows us to express our emotions best," Bourou said, while admitting that Greek youth are a bit of an anomaly in Europe in this respect.

According to the local

affiliate of Sony Music, the Hellinadika Phenomenon has also had an effect on record sales. The local repertoire has always done well, accounting for 56 per cent of sales in 1995, more even than Britain's 51 per cent.

But now the market share is nudging 65 per cent, and the Phenomenon is also reflected on the radio. A number of stations have sprung up broadcasting only Greek music, and attract record audiences.

Choosing a spot to tie the knot

By Midge Gillies

THESE IS now so much choice about where to get married that picking the right venue can seem as bewildering as finding the right person to marry.

Couples can tie the knot in places ranging from a stately home or castle, on a Caribbean beach or in a plain, old-fashioned register office or church. This increased choice is due to the 1994 Marriage Act, which gave local authorities in England and Wales the power to license premises other than register offices to hold non-religious weddings.

Since the law came into force in April 1995 nearly 1,500 buildings have been approved. More than 800 of these are hotels, about 80 are council-owned buildings such as town halls, 42 are stately homes and the rest are a mixture of the bizarre and the exotic.

Ships (they have to be moored), caves, a zoo, football grounds and nightclubs are among the most unusual. A licensed venue is ideal for anyone who doesn't want to marry in a church, but still wants their Big Day to feel special.

It can also be a good option if you've been married before and want to make sure the event feels different. Although the cere-

mony is essentially the same as a register office wedding, there is more time to stamp your mark on it by introducing (non-religious) music and readings.

Ease the strain

The new venues can also help ease the strain of getting married. If, like most people, you hold the ceremony and reception at the same place you won't have to worry about losing guests in between.

The first question you should ask when you visit your potential wedding venue is where you will exchange vows. Don't assume that this will take place in the room with the hotel's best view over a river, or a castle's best view over a river, or a castle's sumptuous banquet hall — it could well be in something resembling a broom cupboard.

Ask which other parts of the building will be available on the day. It is important that the room where you let your hair down afterwards has a different atmosphere from the one where you exchange solemn vows.

The steps of a dramatic, sweeping staircase could be used for the speeches (as in Four Weddings And A Funeral), or you could serve drinks in an intimate oak-

pannelled room before the ceremony begins.

Make sure the building fits in with the style of wedding dress. A mediaeval castle could be the perfect setting if you plan to wear a Maid Marian style gown, but a Victorian battleship may be a bit cramped for a huge meringue wedding frock.

One mother-of-the-bride only allowed the marriage to take place in a Georgian stately home after the door to the wedding room was measured to make sure that she and her extravagant hat could squeeze through it.

The day will also be reflected in where your official photos are taken. Some football grounds allow the players' entrance to become a tunnel of love and couples to be pictured on the hallowed turf. Several stately homes have lakes, statues and ornate doors that all make stunning backdrops.

When you get married also varies from venue to venue. Some are open at times, such as bank holidays, when register offices are closed. Others are governed by their main activity: If you choose a football club or race track a wedding on a particular Saturday may be a non-runner. Some schools which have wedding licences only use them outside term time.

Even if you're not competing with a major sporting fixture, you should make

sure you know what else will be happening on the day — especially if you're marrying at a tourist attraction.

Most couples wouldn't want to share the limelight with a vintage car rally, or find their guests lost in a recreation of a Civil War battle scene.

Unless you've taken over the whole site for the day, you should also consider the "ogle factor." If the venue is open to the public you could well become a tourist attraction — which some blushing brides may not enjoy.

You should also beware of the hidden costs involved in hiring some venues. Ask if

you're liable for damages — especially if the building is crammed full of priceless artifacts. If your best friend smashes a Ming vase in her desperation to catch the bride's bouquet you could be left with a bill you'll still be paying off at your golden wedding.

Some hotels will insist you take over the whole building, or hold the wedding mid-week because — so they argue — a raucous wedding group can spoil the fun for other customers. This needn't be all bad, though, as you can usually secure a good B&B rate for your guests.

Although most hotels

should be fully equipped for the needs of the average wedding, more unusual venues often have more atmosphere than power points. A disco may not be feasible, or allowed, in an early Tudor hall — although its spacious grounds will offer plenty of room for carparking and your departure by balloon or helicopter. When you've decided on the venue make sure the main points: Where, when and how much are confirmed in writing. As your marriage certificate will show, things look much more official when they're written down — London Press Service.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS WEEK

If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however, measured or far away

— Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862).

I suppose it can be truthfully said that hope is the only universal liar who never loses his reputation for veracity

— Robert G. Ingersoll, American lawyer, politician (1833-1899).

If you can talk brilliantly about a problem, it can create the consoling illusion that it has been mastered

— Stanley Kubrick, American movie director (1928-).

Know the true value of time — snatch, seize and enjoy every moment of it

— Lord Chesterfield, English statesman (1694-1773).

Trust me

By Jean-Claude Elias

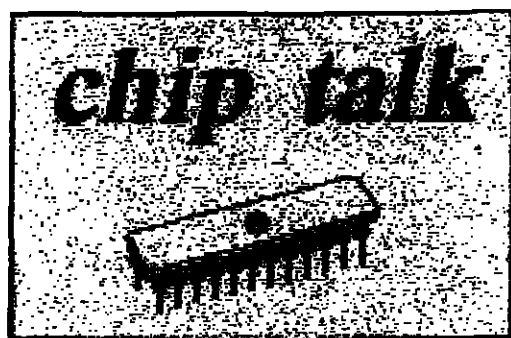
PERSONAL COMPUTING takes all its interest from the moment one adopts the machine to perform a given task or a set of tasks. AND completely discards the old manual ways. This means for example that if you decide to balance your checkbook using a PC spreadsheet programme, you should also give up the paperwork you used to do before for that purpose. Many people, afraid of making mistakes while using computers, or afraid of losing the data inside the machine, maintain the manual work in parallel with the computerised one. This, of course, is nonsense.

Operating a PC without fully trusting it is a contradiction in itself. Yet it is the case of many a user. What are the reasons behind such a negative attitude? Why is it ridiculous to trust the machine only "partially"?

To doubt the absolute reliability of a PC system may be understandable. Technically speaking, any piece of hardware can and will let you down one day or another. Be it the failure of one of its components (hard disk, processor, etc.) or a fault caused by the electrical current, any computer runs under such a permanent threat. Though modern systems are infinitely more reliable than early PCs and have become more tolerant to power imperfections and fluctuations, the danger still exists.

There are two easy, inexpensive remedies to this sort of threats. The first is the installation of an UPS, a battery-fitted power supply device that ensures virtually perfect protection against power problems and failures. The second is the making of back up copies of one's sensitive, important files, on regular basis. These two solutions alone should give any user, whether at home or in the office, peace of mind about his data.

Another cause of concern among users is the lack of knowledge in operating the programmes. For being unsure



of how to manipulate a given piece of software, some users develop an understandable fear of making errors and therefore ending with wrong or corrupt data. Again the cure is amazingly simple — learn software well before you use it.

Once the above three elements are taken care of — the UPS, backing up your data and knowing your software well — there is no reason whatsoever not to trust a PC completely. I have often heard people complain that using computers can be a waste of time. Well, if they still maintain the old manual system in addition to the computerised one, I totally agree: One of the systems is redundant! Guess which one!

All those who for fear of losing or damaging their data lose sleep over it, or maintain an additional manual system should make a bold decision, give up computers for good or tackle the problem as described above. Wasting one's time over two systems is a sad situation. True computing consists of doing your work with PCs, exclusively. It's only when you forget about the manual system and depend entirely on the machines that you feel their power and all the advantages they can bring. For that you have to rely on them, unconditionally, or go back to the Stone Age.

Joking all the way to the top

By Samer Ghaleb Bagaeen



IN THESE changing times, personal popularity scoring assessment systems for university lecturers are a part of the new order of business at our universities. Student feedback has become an important part of teaching, and popularity has become an inherent objective of lecturing.

But the thought that the objectionable student at the back of the class who has been asking awkward and discourteous questions throughout the term is going to sit down sometime before the end of the course and write abusive and insulting remarks on a teacher's efforts, can also be a cause of some concern, particularly if such comments are going to be read out at a meeting of the Departmental Teaching Committee.

Experience tells us that some student comments can be quite blunt and rude. One which I particularly recall is that "Professor X serves no useful purpose on this planet."

In light of all this, staff development seminars around the world have tended to settle around the use of humour so that lecturers can become more popular.

One key to humour in lectures is, of course, to relate it to the subject matter in hand. But another line of humour which many lecturers use, and one which students particularly enjoy, is the abuse of colleagues, especially when the staff member concerned is unpopular.

A simple comment that a young-looking colleague is

"only 18" goes down well, as does the joke that an older colleague who is 83 years old has been so for 20 years.

The point to all this is that lecturers have to make students laugh as well as teach them. I still remember one lecture early in the morning at the beginning of the week in an old building which everyone hated. I remember it because the teacher always told a major joke in the middle of the lecture, and it is these jokes that form my major recollections of that particular course.

If it is not a rule, then it should be, but I think that a joke some 35 minutes into a 50 minute lecture where most of the class are asleep, and where even the smart ones at the front have been looking at their watches, can save the day.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

Mohammad A. Shuqair

HOWLERS

— He thinks he is the very apex of creation. Actually, he's the ex-ape.

— Whoever first said "Love thy neighbour" never had one like him.

— He's the type you'd like to run into sometime — when you're driving and he's walking.

— Some people are born great, some become great — he just grates.

— He has a dual personality — Dr. Heckle and Mr. Snide.

— He's a square shooter — one of those squares you'd love to shoot.

— If he ever needs a friend, he'll have to get a dog.

BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

SPORT

• HERE is a quiz about sports nicknames from around the world. The object of the game is to read the nickname then give the actual name of the player.

Sure, the rules are easy. But let's see how many you know before you go dubbing me DIZZY DON!

1. Galloping Ghost.
2. Georgia Peach.
3. P&G.
4. The Iron Horse.
5. The Lip.
6. The Four Horsemen.
7. The Norwegian Doll.
8. Joltin' Joe.
9. Wild Bull of the Pampas.
10. The Manassa Mauler.

JOKES



"Remember, this is what a dog looks like."

• TEACHER: "Jimmy, why don't you wash your face? I can see what you had for breakfast this morning."

JIMMY: "What was it?"

TEACHER: "Eggs."

JIMMY: "Wrong, sir, that was yesterday."

LET'S CHAT IN ARABIC

** I must write a letter to my friend.
Yajib an aktob rissalah ela sadeeqi.

** This letter is urgent and important.
Haathehi rissalah musta'jalah wa-haammah.

** Dear Professor
Ustazi al-aziz.

** Dear Madam.
Sayyidati al-azizah.

** My dear wife.
Zawjati al-azizah.

** With hope and respect, I write this to you.
Ma'a ehtirami wa-ashami, aktob elayak haathehi ar-rissalah.

** Your letter gave me great pleasure.
Rissalatok ass'adatni kathiran.

** My most sincere congratulations.
Ma'a akhliss at-tahani.

** Much love from me.
Hobbi laka kathiran.

** Please let me know by the return mail.
Arjou an tofeedani be'awdatil bareed.

** I sent the letter by air mail.
Arsealt ar-rissalah bil-bareed al-jaw'wi.

** Registered letter.
Rissalah musajjalah.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES?

• PISCES: Travelling, especially by sea. Photography. Constructing and using wireless apparatus. Making apparatus involving the principles of electricity. The drama, ranging from theatre-going to amateur theatricals. Girls are interested in various arts and crafts.

• ARIES: Travelling, touring, especially by car and on foot. Anything connected with motor-cars. Sight-seeing. Making things. Girls are interested in a variety of arts and crafts.

PUZZLES

(A) Find the words which mean the same as the words inside the brackets:

N + (exit) = (female)

(B) INSERT THE MISSING NUMBER:

4	6	3	8
2	8	4	4
6	5	?	10

JTV CHANNEL 2 WEEKLY PREVIEW

Thursday, August 7, 1997

2:00	Holy Koran
2:10	Cartoons
3:00	America's Funniest People
3:30	He Shoots He Scores
4:00	French Programmes
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	French Programme
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Trivial Pursuit
7:45	Parenthood
8:00	Cinema Cinema Cinema
8:30	Lois And Clark
9:10	Kung Fu — The Legend Continues
10:00	News In English
10:30	Movie
12:00	Step By Step

7:35	Fresh Prince Of Belair
8:00	Cinema, Cinema, Cinema
8:30	National Geographic
9:10	Renegade
10:00	News In English
10:30	One West Waikiki
11:15	Sisters

Monday, August 11, 1997

2:00	Holy Koran
2:10	Cartoon
3:00	Gillette Sports Special
3:30	Deep Water Haven
4:00	Animal Show
4:30	Ocean Girl
5:15	French Programmes
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	French Programme
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Neighbours
8:00	Murphy Brown
8:30	Babylon 5
9:10	Highlander
10:00	News In English
10:35	Emergency Room (E.R.)
11:15	Homicide

Friday, August 8, 1997

2:00	Holy Koran
2:05	Cartoons
3:00	French Programmes
4:00	Family Matters
4:30	NBA
6:10	French Film
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	French Programme
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Neighbours
8:00	The Health Show
8:30	Hawkeye
9:10	Drama Series
10:00	News In English
10:30	Miniseries
12:00	Movie

Tuesday, August 12, 1997

2:00	Holy Koran
2:35	French Programme
3:00	Square One TV
3:35	Dog House
4:00	Album Show
6:10	French Programmes
7:00	Le Journal
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Coach
8:00	Tilt 23.5
8:30	Encounter
9:10	Nature Of Things (Documentary)
10:00	News In English
10:30	West Beach
11:15	Miniseries

Saturday, August 9, 1997

2:00	Holy Koran
2:10	Twinkle
2:30	Wishbone
3:00	Blue Heelers
3:30	World Of Geo
4:00	The Valley Between
4:30	Tilt
5:00	French Programme
7:00	Le Journal
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Neighbours
8:00	Ties That Bind
8:30	Prism
9:10	Time Trax
10:00	News In English
10:30	Movie
12:00	Ellen

Wednesday, August 13, 1997

2:00	Holy Koran
2:10	Cartoon
3:00	Energy Express
4:00	American Chart Show
6:00	French Programmes
7:00	Le Journal
7:30	News Headlines

2:00	Holy Koran
2:10	Cartoons
3:00	Global Gardner
3:30	Spell Binder
4:00	Monsters Today
4:30	Border Town
5:00	French Programmes
7:00	Le Journal
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Neighbours
8:00	Soldier's Diary
8:30	Oprah Winfrey Show
9:10	Spencer For Hire
10:00	News In English
10:30	Land's End
11:15	American Gothic



...Everett and Julia Robt

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Rupert Everett — The leading man du jour talks about being gay



Rupert Everett and Julia Roberts in the film *My Best Friend's Wedding*

By Mark Kennedy
The Associated Press
NEW YORK — Rupert Everett gives his entire a puzzled look, before using a fork to poke the heap of vegetables obscuring his salmon.

"Excuse me, I'm really sorry," he finally says to the waitress in his clipped British accent. "Do you happen to have this without the stuff on top of it?"

Flustered, the waitress can only stare at the 38-year-old actor with the matinee-idol looks whose six-foot-plus (more than 1.8 metres tall), gym-sculpted body is crammed into the chic eatery's window seat.

Everett is in no mood for camouflage this afternoon. The Scottish-born actor is doing one of the things he enjoys least of all, which is talking about being gay in Hollywood.

"Even talking about it, I'm putting more nails into my coffin," he says, sighing. "The more I talk about it, the more an issue it becomes and it grows and grows."

Yes, but so does his acting reputation. Critics have gone hoarse cheering Everett's performance as Julia Roberts' dapper and spiritual soul mate, George, in *My Best Friend's Wedding*.

Everett's film-stealing portrayal of a multidimensional gay man is lively, spontaneous, brilliantly timed stuff. After his 20-minute, midpicture spin, he's gone until the end, and his sudden absence depletes the movie of its juice.

With his brooding, gigolo good looks and refined, Eu-

ropean air, Everett has been dubbed the new Grant — part Cary, part Hugh. But is Hollywood ready for its next chick-smooching romantic lead to be gay?

"You go see a film star not just because of what you hear about their performance, but because you're buying into their lifestyle," Everett says. "Everything's about lifestyles now. So we're all forced to put our cards on the table."

Everett tossed his own cards face-up after coming out in 1989. Happily, there was no shock over here. He is, after all, British. And that's odd enough.

"Look how everyone was absolutely certain that Hugh Grant was with a transsexual and not with a woman," he says, laughing. "They were really disappointed when he wasn't. Americans think we're all queer."

All kidding aside, Everett would rather keep his personal life private. Yeah, right.

"I must say, it's kind of fateful for any actor to have any type of sexuality. The sexuality of an actor should be absolutely what the audience wants it to be," he says. "And in an ideal world, no actor would be divulging their sexuality because the audience should be able to make of it what they want."

"But we live in a world that's political and actors are looked up to to set a proper example," he adds, his voice deepening. "It's just another one of the really sick things about the world."

A shadow falls over Everett's already pouty, child-like features.

"So my test is going to be, are people going to find me appealing as a homo-sexual man? Will there be a problem when they see me making out with a girl?" he asks. "Who knows? I don't know. Maybe. Maybe not. It depends."

Ah, the predicament. Or, as his wonderfully drawn George would say: "The misery the exquisite tragedy. The Susan Hayward of it all." But even if Everett is pigeonholed with homosexual roles, he won't complain.

"If I have to just play gay, I'm not unhappy about that either," he says. "I don't have a problem playing a range of gay characters, if that's what I have to do. I don't find that limiting. You have to accept what people feel."

The plump pillow of Everett's lower lip curls into a smile. "Surprise, middle America not all gay people are the same."

Hollywood's already calling. Hot on the successful heels of *My Best Friend's Wedding*, Everett and Roberts will be reunited in the planned comedy *Martha and Arthur*, playing movie stars stuck in a marriage of convenience after Everett's character privately reveals he's gay.

Meanwhile, Tristar Pictures snapped up Everett's pitch to become movie-dom's first openly homosexual British intelligence agent, in the action picture titled, *P. S. I Love You*, a kind of gay 007.

"I think I've got quite a good window of opportunity," he says of his back-to-back deals. "It depends

what I do with it."

As Everett knows well, that window closes quickly. Shortly after making a stunning debut in 1984's *Another Country*, the actor leaped across the ocean only to discover that bubblegum, all-American fare like *St. Elmo's Fire* and *The Breakfast Club* ruled the box offices.

"It was the period when films were very clean," he recalls. "There were no import possibilities for a tall European like me."

Frustrated with Margaret Thatcher's Britain and hounded by a "pitiless" English press which sniffed a new, bad-boy target, Everett wandered through Europe, making small independent films and practicing his stagecraft.

They're a gypsy race. They go where the work is and there's never been much work in England. They're treated very badly," he says.

Back home, the gossip columns declared him rude, arrogant, spoiled. Rumours swirled that Everett had drifted into prostitution. One tabloid headline screamed: "Rupert is gay junkie shock."

"You're a joke as soon as you're ripe," he says ruefully. "I was fairly British. But not that British. It turned my head about being a star."

Some of that frustration made its way into the first of Everett's two novels, *Hello Darling, Are You Working?* — the semi-autobiographical story of a male hustler who becomes famous in an American soap opera, only to emerge as a celebrity prostitute when his show is

cancelled.

(The London Sunday Times, true to form, described the 1992 book as "mucus between covers.")

Everett denies his book was critical of Hollywood: "It drew a parallel between an actor and a prostitute — both jobs which people find attractive. We are all prostitutes in the end. But people don't like having a mirror held up to themselves."

Then, as the 1990s progressed, something wonderful happened: Merchant-Ivory Films scored at the box office. Jane Austen costume dramas became hip. The Brits were hot.

Reinvigorated, Everett tackled a collage of character roles — portraying the chinless Lord Rutledge opposite a chimp in *Dustin Dicks* in the languid *Prince of Wales* in *The Madness of George III* and a loutish son in *Ready To Wear*, where he forged a friendship with Julia Roberts.

Although the initial role of George in *Wedding* was much smaller, Roberts produced director P. J. Hogan to increase Everett's screen time, adding scenes to showcase his comic timing.

"I think the whole secret of any role is just a lightness-of-touch. That's a very difficult thing to do if, say, this was your first film. It's hard if you haven't got the knack of it."

And with that, Everett strides out into the sunsplashed afternoon and towards a waiting black limo — star treatment for a star-in-waiting.

"I can do this effortlessly," he laughs.

Can't buy me success — What became of the Beatle babies

By Sarah Vincent

STELLA McCartney's appointment as head designer at the fashion house of Chloe is a terrific endorsement of the 25-year-old's ability and talent.

With a father who is one of the four most famous pop stars of all time, it would have been tempting for Stella to have basked in his glory and lived on his immense wealth.

But she has completed the rigorous training to become a designer, graduating from Central St. Martin's School of Art in London two years ago and working at her own label ever since.

Now she will either sink or swim in a cut-throat world where being Sir Paul McCartney's daughter is sure to attract backbiters.

Life has never been easy for the nine children of the Fab Four. Stella has carved out a brand new career on for herself, but what about the others?

• **MARY MCCARTNEY**, 26, is the oldest of Sir Paul's children. Given as normal a childhood as possible, the McCartneys were sent to the local state junior school in

St. John's Wood, North London.

Mary went on to state secondary school in Rye, and has since had a structured career in photography and music publishing, beginning on a modest £6,000 a year as picture editor at Music Sales, a West-End publishing company.

Now, having learnt her trade, she works for her parents' company MPL Communications and is said to be a very talented photographer.

• **JAMES MCCARTNEY**, 19, is the youngest McCartney, and has made headlines for his accident-prone behaviour. He was airlifted to hospital after being swept out to sea while surfing near the family estate in East Sussex and more recently was trapped under the family Land-Rover which turned over while he was driving.

Although he avoids the glare of publicity, James, a student, has aspirations to become a drummer and guitarist and plays guitar on Sir Paul's new solo album *Flaming Pie*.

• **JULIAN LENNON**, 34,

is one of the few Beatles children to have actively sought publicity. The son of John and Cynthia, he is famous for his musical career as well as a turbulent relationship with Lennon's widow, Yoko Ono.

He hero-worships his father although they barely knew each other, Lennon having left home when Julian was aged five. But the similarities are three — musical talent, voice, looks, drug habit (now kicked), and a string of glamorous girlfriends including Katie Wagner and Brooke Shields. Julian became a millionaire through his own writing, but his popularity soon plummeted and he ran into financial trouble.

A bitter argument arose when Julian claimed Yoko was not giving him a fair share of his late father's inheritance, but the couple seem to have repaired the relationship, and Julian is to receive a multi-million pound settlement.

• **SEAN LENNON**, 21, is the son of John and Yoko, and remains unusually close to his mother, with whom he performed on an album last year entitled *Ima*.

Heir to the £250 million Lennon fortune, Sean is still looking for his niche. He moved to California to set up a new life, but after three months returned to his mother in New York. He also gave up on an undergraduate course at Columbia University.

Recently he was living in a £2 million apartment adjoining Yoko's in the turreted block outside which his father was killed.

As a guitar player, he performs occasionally and, whenever he does, his adoring mother is there to congratulate him.

• **ZAK STARKEY**, 31, followed in his famous father's footsteps and took up drumming. He has done well as a session musician, even if many people wanted to hear him just because of his father.

For many years there was bad feeling between father and rebel son. But the two became reconciled when Ringo discovered Zak and his wife Sarah, whom he married when he was 19, were having a baby.

• **JASON STARKEY**, 29, is the only one of nine

Beatles' children with a criminal record. In 1986 he was fined £125 after stealing a stereo from a van following a drinking session, and later appeared in court in London twice for cannabis possession.

Although he plays the drums and has worked as a roadie, he has no defined career and leads a private life in London, keeping his background quiet.

• **LEE STARKEY**, 26, is Ringo's only daughter. In 1995 she underwent an emergency operation to remove a brain tumour, only eight months after her mother, Maureen, died of leukaemia.

Before this she led a hectic social life having left school without any qualifications. She tried drama school, beauty school and working in a record shop — none of which lasted long.

• **DHANI HARRISON**, 19, is the only child of George Harrison and his second wife, Argentinian-born Olivia Arias.

His name is a reminder of George Harrison's liaison with Eastern mysticism, but Dhani has fully embraced Western convention by becoming a member of Leander Rowing Club at Henley.

Like the McCartneys, Dhani was kept away from the press, and attended Shiplake College public school in Oxfordshire where he was said to be very popular and well-adjusted.

For his 11th birthday party, George is said to have



She's leaving home — Stella McCartney has designs on the Paris fashion house of Chloe

spent £10,000 flying a team of skateboarders in from New York to perform for the boys.

Dhani's balanced nature is

put down to the fact that Harrison was the last of the Beatles to start a family and by the time the boy was born his father was a fading

star. Dhani has inherited some of his father's talent and has learnt to play the guitar — London Press Service.

President never looked as good as in *Air Force One*

By Brigitte Dussaux

Agence France Presse
WASHINGTON — Imagine a U.S. president who looks like Harrison Ford, fights like Jackie Chan and has the principles of Socrates.

His name is President James Marshall, the mythic protagonist of the summer blockbuster movie *Air Force One*, and he is making President Bill Clinton very happy this summer.

James Marshall, played by Ford (star of the *Indiana Jones* and *Star Wars* films) is a former war hero turned president who singlehandedly vanquishes a group of Kazakh terrorists who hijack the presidential jet.

Marshall is close in age to Clinton (51) and, like the real president, has a teenage daughter. Both presidents are

also football fans.

But for the first time in a series of screen presidents, the chief of *Air Force One* is brimming with good qualities: Courage, intelligence, compassion and personal charisma. He even has a woman (Glenn Close) as his vice president.

It's not surprising that Mr. Clinton has seen *Air Force One* twice.

"It was a very good movie," Mr. Clinton told reporters as he stepped off the real *Air Force One* last week. "You guys should watch it."

Mr. Clinton was not at all amused by a previous presidential incarnation on screen: Himself, incorporated via computer and newsreel footage into the smash hit movie *Contact*. Mr. Clinton is seen urging Americans to stay calm

after aliens put a call through to Earth from outer space.

Air Force One, directed by German-born action maestro Wolfgang Petersen, is the fourth major Hollywood movie this year to give the U.S. president a key role.

Before the Clinton video clone in *Contact*, there was the drunken, rapacious chief played by Gene Hackman in *Absolute Power*, a president who appears to lack a wife and who strangles his sexy date when she rebuffs his aggressive advance.

In *Murder At 1600* — the White House address is 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue — the first family is the backdrop for a homicide that triggers a chilling coverup.

So the president aboard *Air Force One* would be far more agreeable to Mr. Clinton,

whose own image has been stained recently by the Paula Jones sexual harassment case.

Mr. Clinton had only a minor cavil with the movie, which zoomed into first place at the box office after opening last week.

"As far as I know, there is no escape pod," he said, referring to a flight capsule on the screen aircraft. Mr. Clinton also pointed out that his Secret Service men "don't quite have the arsenal depicted" in the movie.

But the movie's success may help propel another ex-actor into the White House after Ronald Reagan served two consecutive terms: according to *People* magazine, Harrison Ford is so compelling as president that viewers of the movie want to vote for him.



The long and winding road — Zak reunited with his father Ringo Starr after his turbulent years apart

Throwing light on blocked arteries

By John Newell

EVERY CHILD who has played with a torch, pressed it against their palm and seen the red glow on the other side, knows that light can pass through flesh. British scientists have now used this fact to build scanners using light to search for early signs of blocked arteries or tumours.

Optical scanners avoid the small but real health risks associated with the use of X-rays for repeated routine screening. They are potentially especially valuable for revealing areas of the body which are starved of oxygen because of impaired blood supplies. When they come into use, hopefully in three or four years' time, optical scanners are expected to cost about one-tenth as much as the CT scanners used for some similar purposes today.

Blocked arteries

Medical physicist Dr. Peter Van der Zee, of the University of Hertfordshire at Hatfield, southern England, has developed a prototype optical scanner to detect blocked arteries in the lower limbs. Such blockages are very common, especially in elderly people. They often lead to tissue being starved of oxy-

gen and becoming gangrenous. Early treatment is essential, otherwise the tissue may become so badly infected that part of the leg has to be amputated. The optical scanner is very well suited for this as haemoglobin, the red pigment in blood, absorbs light very strongly and so shows up blocked arteries clearly.

Dr. Van der Zee says he sees several other applications for the type of scanner he is developing. "The technique lends itself to other types of imaging. It is being used, at the research stage, for neonatal heads, which are small enough to allow optical imaging, to reveal and localise deficiencies in brain oxygenation. Other groups are looking at the method as a means of localising brain tumours. Tumours in breast tissue is another area where this could be applied."

A group at University College, London is working to develop an optical scanner for use in mammography (breast cancer screening). It uses the same principles as Dr. Van der Zee's instrument, employing a ring of optical fibres which can act as detectors as well as transmitters. "Light only penetrates about fifteen centimetres

into flesh, and it is absorbed and scattered far more quickly than X-rays, which are far more penetrating. But, says Dr. Van der Zee, computing power enables clear images to be reconstructed from scattered light.

Light source

"The principle of the scanner is in some ways similar to a CT (computerised tomography) scanner. The light source shines onto the surface of the tissue and light emitted from the tissue is collected by a detector. The detector scans around the tissue as it would in a CT scanner. Then the light source is moved to the next location, and the detector again scans around the tissue being scanned, and this is repeated so as to build up a complete scan. After that, an optical image needs to be constructed from the sets of measurements. Direct imaging as in conventional X-rays is not possible using light, because of the very large amount of light scattering. That is the main problem in using this technique."

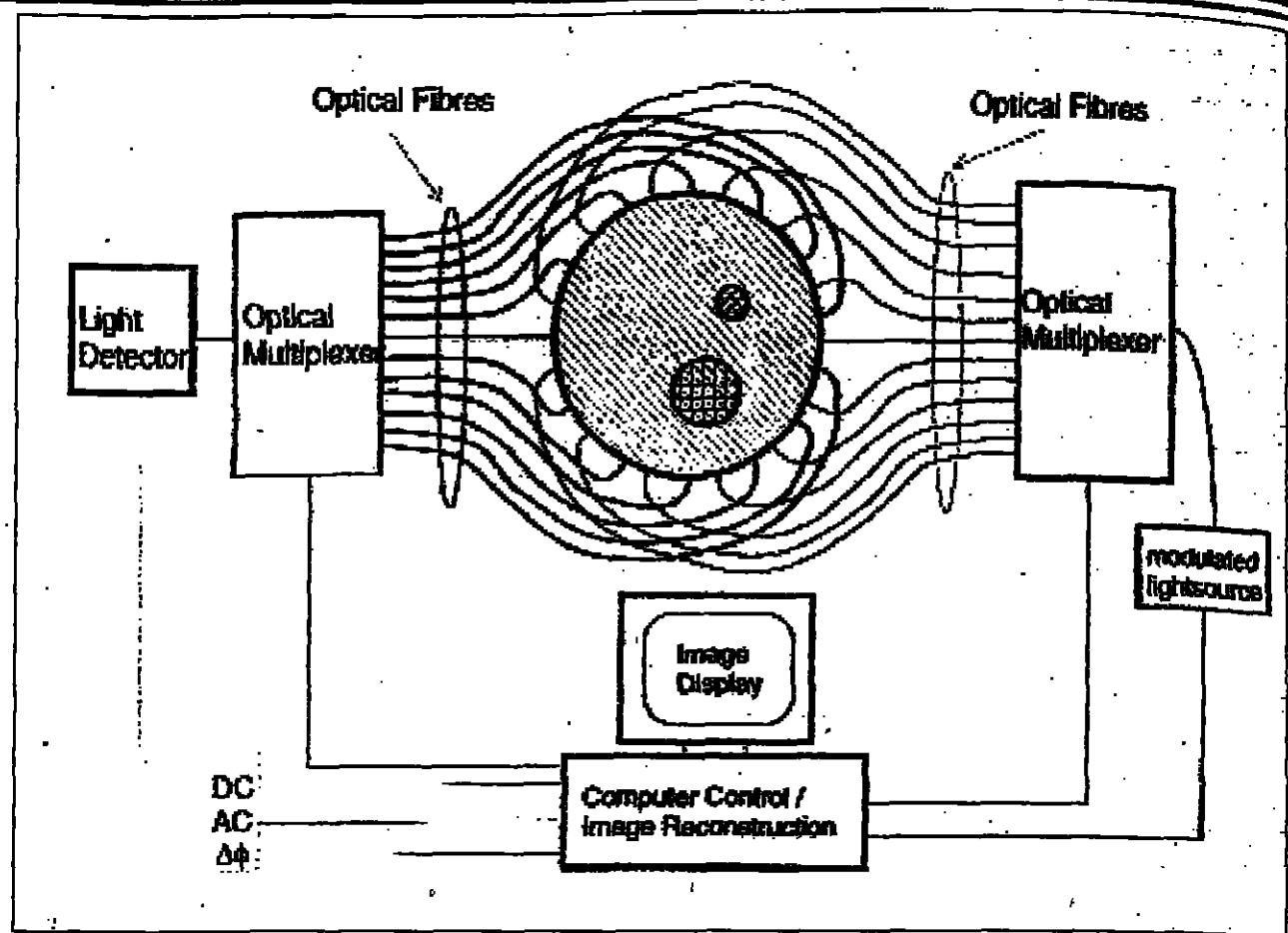
At the moment it takes a powerful computer about one hour to produce a clear image of part of the body. More computer power will be needed to get that image

in the sort of time, a few minutes maximum, needed for use in a clinic. But Dr. Van der Zee and others now know how to put that computer power to work, and see good reasons for doing so.

Says Dr. Van der Zee: "The advantages of optical scanning techniques are, first of all, that the source is not potentially harmful to the patient unlike repeated conventional X-rays, CT scanning or positron emission tomography. All these techniques use potentially harmful radiation, which mean that in some cases the diagnostic procedure can actually induce a tumour. That is especially a problem if you want to do regular repeated screening. Another advantage is that the equipment can be quite mobile, and that is important for screening programmes. With CT or Magnetic Resonance imaging (MRI) scanners the patient has to be taken to the instrument, whereas with the optical scanner the instrument can be taken to the patient."

Health risk

That would take it possible to monitor patients in care continuously without risk to their health. A further important advantage is that the cost of optical scanners



Phase resolved optical tomography system. Information in the detected light is DC level, AC amplitude and phase shift. This provides raw data for an image reconstruction algorithm. Images show differences in absorption and scattering in the tissue

would be about ten times less than that of CT or MRI scanners, comparable rather to the cost of ultrasonic scanners. Also, says Dr. Van der Zee, the optical scanner will give information the others cannot.

"In particular they give you information about the oxygenation of the tissue, the amount of blood that is available to it and also the percentage of that blood that is oxygenated. The disadvantage compared to other techniques is that the spatial resolution is limited. Our hope is that we will be able to resolve features down to half a centimetre in size, but we cannot go beyond that

because of the large amount of light scattering. So we will not get images as sharp as those obtainable with MRI or CT scanners." Optical scanners may be used to illuminate any part of the body thin enough to shine light through even at an angle: limbs, breasts, testicles and foetal heads for

example. Dr. Van der Zee will have a clinical prototype scanner ready for use in clinical trials by the end of the year. Other groups are at about the same stage of development. Hopefully commercial instruments will be available in another two or three years — London Press Service.

Pregnancy does not affect breast cancer death — study

LONDON — Danish researchers have said they had found no evidence that having a baby can put a woman at risk of a breast cancer relapse.

Their study of more than 170 women who had breast cancer and then had a baby showed they had no more risk than any other woman of a relapse.

"We found no evidence that a pregnancy after breast-cancer treatment in-

creased the risk of a poor outcome," Mads Melbye and colleagues at the Danish Epidemiology Science Centre in Copenhagen wrote in a report in the Lancet medical journal.

They looked at the records of 5,700 women with breast cancer listed with the Danish Breast Cancer Cooperative Group, which has collected information on the disease for 20 years.

"Among these, 173

women became pregnant after treatment of breast cancer," they wrote.

Dr. Melbye's group was following up on studies that have found strong hormonal influences on breast-cancer.

"A woman's reproductive history strongly influences her risk of developing breast cancer. One of the best-known associations is the protective effect of having many children, preferably at a young age," they wrote.

"Although childbearing may reduce the risk of breast cancer overall, evidence suggests that childbearing, at least in some circumstances, may have a negative effect on the prognosis," they added.

"However, we found that pregnancy after breast cancer had no negative effect on prognosis."

Consumer groups want caffeine labelled on food

WASHINGTON (R) — Caffeine is a mildly addictive drug linked to miscarriages and other health problems and should be more closely regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), a group of consumer and health experts said.

Consumers have a right to know how much caffeine is added by manufacturers to soft drinks, ice creams, yogurt and other foods, according to the Centre for Science in the Public Interest.

The group, along with more than three dozen scientists and consumer groups, petitioned the FDA to require the caffeine content of foods to be displayed on labels.

The American Medical Association (AMA) recently asked the FDA to require labelling of foods that contain added caffeine.

"Caffeine is the only drug that is widely added to the food supply," said Michael

Jacobson, executive director of the Centre for Science in the Public Interest. "Knowing the caffeine content is important to many people, especially women who are or might become pregnant."

Caffeine also is suspected of increasing the risk of osteoporosis, the group said. U.S. food manufacturers said there is no scientific evidence showing moderate consumption of caffeine causes any health risks.

"We believe the majority of consumers know which products contain naturally occurring caffeine," said a statement issued by the National Food Processors Association, a trade group representing the \$430 billion food processing industry.

The FDA already requires food labels to list caffeine, if additional amounts have been added, but does not require identification of the amount.

"Should a consumer want

to know how much caffeine is in a particular product, they can find out by calling the manufacturer's 1-800 telephone number listed on the product," the food processors' statement added.

But the consumer advocates said the amount of caffeine varies widely in foods and is too difficult for consumers to estimate. For example, a cup of Dannon coffee yogurt has as much caffeine as a 12-ounce can of Coca-Cola, while a Dannon light cappuccino yogurt has no caffeine. And a Sunkist orange soda has more caffeine than a Pepsi, while Minute Maid orange soda has none, the centre said.

A spokesman for the FDA said the petition would be reviewed during the next few months, but he downplayed the likelihood of the agency acting on it.

"We don't know of any new scientific data about caffeine that would change the current regulatory

stance of the agency," the FDA spokesman said. "And we don't know of any food products where caffeine is being added in the amount roughly equal to a cup of coffee."

FDA regulations allow food manufacturers to add up to 68 milligrams of caffeine in a 12 ounce product.

By comparison, a typical cup of coffee contains between 140 and 260 milligrams of caffeine, depending on the beans and preparation.

Consuming the equivalent of caffeine from several cups of coffee a day can lead to insomnia and anxiety, said Roland Griffiths, a professor at Johns Hopkins University Medical School. "Ceasing the consumption of caffeine often leads to withdrawal symptoms such as headache and fatigue. Caffeine is a mildly addictive drug and parents might wish to limit their children's consumption of it," he said.

Quest intensifies for gene clues to hypertension

LONDON (R) — The quest for genetic clues explaining why some people are more prone than others to hypertension is intensifying, doctors said.

Genes sing a pre-historic song and we must pay attention to it, Dr. Clarence Grim of the Medical College of Wisconsin told delegates to the 12th International Interdisciplinary Conference on Hypertension in blacks.

The four-day conference, which opened Monday, is examining why hypertension affects nearly twice as many blacks as whites and what can be done about it.

Delegates were told that blacks may be more sensitive to salt and thus more vulnerable to high blood pressure than whites. They were also told that blacks may suffer more from dysfunction of the endothelium, or the lining of blood vessels.

But delegates firmly rejected the notion that the possible genetic causes of hypertension were exclusive to one racial group. This debate is about genetics and not about race, said one delegate.

Added another, there are probable genetic predispositions towards hyperten-

sion, but they cut across racial lines.

Doctor John Flack of Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit said that much of the current research failed to take account of physical and social differences among people within a single racial group. As a result, differences between people of different racial groups were grossly overstated, he said.

Both black and white people have some predisposition to salt sensitivity and environmental factors affect that. Why don't we look at the environmental factors, he asked.

Taking another view, Dr. Grim told delegates that the unique characteristics of the slave trade may have predisposed blacks towards salt. Blacks who didn't survive the migration from Africa died from diarrhoea as they were salt deficient. Those who survived had a better ability to retain salt, he said.

Dr. Flack responded by saying that recent studies have shown that people from Finland have higher rates of hypertension than African-Americans and that people from Hungary and the Czech Republic have higher inci-

dences of strokes.

No one invokes genetic explanations for the high

stroke rate among Czechs and Hungarians, he said.

ANSWERS BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

SPORTS

1. Harold (Red) Grange.
2. Ty Cobb.
3. Edson Arantes do Nascimento.
4. Lou Gehrig.
5. Leo Durocher.
6. Jim Crowley, Don Miller, Elmer Layden, Harry Stuhldreher.
7. Sonja Henie.
8. Joe DiMaggio.
9. Luis Firpo.
10. Jack Dempsey.

PUZZLES

(A) EGRESS and NEGRESS

(B) 3. Multiply the figures in the first two columns, and divide the product by the number in the fourth column; this gives the number in the third column

$$\begin{array}{r} 5 \times 6 \\ \hline = 3 \\ 10 \end{array}$$

WEEKEND CROSSWORD

By Frances Burton

ACROSS

1. Pleasantly act
5. An galaxy
10. Dealer's partner
15. Treating place for athletes
20. — Church Society
21. Farinella
22. Bury at —
24. Can projection
25. Pasty —
27. Pale —
28. Secure firmly
31. Shared
32. Cup handles
33. Summer
34. Broomy
35. Wile guy
36. Rained
40. Today

DOWN

1. Art movement
2. Set of the first Olympic games
3. Writer Feltner
4. Nonsense verse
5. Apehunting
6. Wrong
7. Endless
8. Yolk
9. Tell (a story)
10. Hungry for
11. Lull
12. Blind as —
13. Drink slowly
14. Vicious
15. Subtly malicious
16. Lie in wait
17. Small lake
18. Moleman
25. A is —

ACROSS

11. Pleasantly act
15. Treating place for athletes
20. — Church Society
21. Farinella
22. Bury at —
24. Can projection
25. Pasty —
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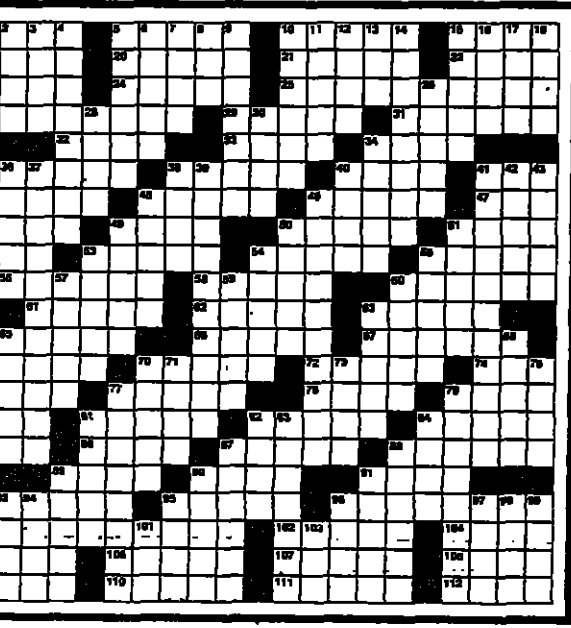
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4. Nonsense verse
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7/25/97

Diagramless 18x19

By Harold B. Counts

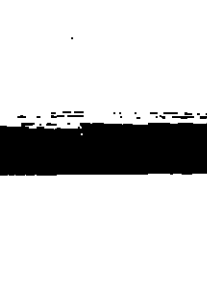
ACROSS

1. Can't fish here
5. Do
10. Change
11. Single-masted boat
12. Crown
14. Mr. Pudd
16. Enthusiastic
17. Chained upon
20. Mica
22. Finally
24. Jewish feast
26. Toss
28. Flowering geiger
30. River in Georgia
31. Swamp
32. Singer Ross
33. Lat
34. Player getting
40. Something owed

DOWN

1. Yolk
2. Time periods
3. Handle clumsily
4. Sign
5. Nibble
6. Dumpy
7. — Gay
8. Surgical implant of a bird
9. — Pipe USAC
10. Female
12. Vascular tissue
13. Adult men, briefly
15. Runes
16. Blackboard
17. Chow
18. Miss Feltner
19. Semibush
21. Dated
22. Dead
23. Foot digit
24. Fashionable
25. Blushing
27. Native of south
28. Household member
30. Winkles

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S SUNDAY PUZZLE



ACROSS

11. Pleasantly act
15. Treating place for athletes
20. — Church Society
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22. Bury at —
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12. Blind as —
13. Drink slowly
14. Vicious
15. Subtly malicious
16. Lie in wait
17. Small lake
18. Moleman
25. A is —

Last Week's Cryptograms

1. At my age, the broad mind and the narrow waist plainly begin to change places.
2. Far too many storms in May may make latest rainfall marks fall.
3. Many a self-made man is proud to say he pulled himself by his bootstraps.
4. If raining cats and dogs, be careful about stepping on puddles.

CRYPTOGRAMS

1. L J T J Y C J Y Q T S T W J V R D P E U Z X S E Y D E S W S I T T E D C Y X W S Q S V E R D J Y W D P A S L S T U T J I C W U V I C V S E T Y W C B S A W T C U W S D.

— By Earl Ireland

2. W I S W X Y Z X W A X R J S Q Y I U X T A Q E U Z C K I Q Y I X Y I K I Y C U H E R A C R A S H.

— By Barbara J. Nigg

3. N A G B A L F A O L N Y L F A G Q E W S A W Q U P G O W A S H A L Z E G O O U S A X Z Y L H A E L A E X N A R A E G Z U A S P H E Z A N Y X R J M U P O W U X Z A W.

— By Rita Salvato

4. R S Y D P S P E N P R E P O N T S. E S Y V O P M E S B I Z Y B I Z Y B I R D E I S Y M T W E E T Y. B I R D. T W D Y R. B I Z Y D D Y V E P O B S W S.

— By K.C. Doyle

High-

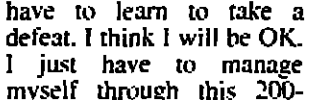
Rob Lever has hit the jackpot, prompting a battle over a burgeoning industry that is expected to reach billions of dollars in the coming years.

Leba

Michael Georgy, a former Lebanese diplomat, has been accused of being a double agent, working for both the Lebanese government and the Israeli intelligence service.



Ottey, Perec qualify in 200, Mutola, Quirot in 800

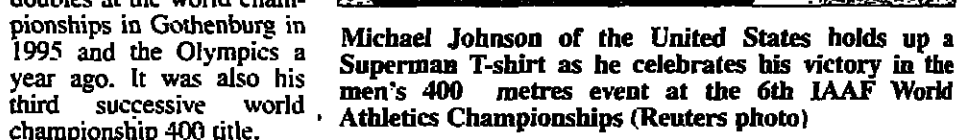


"I don't think I'm 100 per cent," said Perek, who had initially planned to skip the championships but changed

Mozambique both made it to the semifinals of the women's 800 meters by winning their heats.

pion Kenny Harrison placed third with 17.11 and also didn't return for the next two rounds.

Johnson wins 400 metres, forces critics to eat their words



Ugandan Davis Kamoga, who won the bronze at Atlanta, took the silver in

1. The first problem is the lack of a clear definition of the term "problem".
 2. The second problem is the lack of a clear definition of the term "solution".
 3. The third problem is the lack of a clear definition of the term "method".
 4. The fourth problem is the lack of a clear definition of the term "result".
 5. The fifth problem is the lack of a clear definition of the term "process".
 6. The sixth problem is the lack of a clear definition of the term "outcome".
 7. The seventh problem is the lack of a clear definition of the term "effect".
 8. The eighth problem is the lack of a clear definition of the term "impact".
 9. The ninth problem is the lack of a clear definition of the term "consequence".
 10. The tenth problem is the lack of a clear definition of the term "resultant".

...in the ...
...ship ...
...office ...

...ended up ...
...always ...
...career ...

...the Embassy

Cuban Ivan Pedrosa in action during the men's long jump final at the World Championships in Athletics in Athens. Pedrosa won with a jump of 8.42 metres (Reuters photo)

Pedroso retains long jump title

TO Shows:

<u>Nation</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>B</u>
United States	3	3	4
Germany	2	0	1
Ukraine	1	2	1
Portugal	1	1	0
South Africa	1	1	0
Australia	1	0	0
Cuba	1	0	0
Czech Rep.	1	0	0
France	1	0	0
Kenya	1	0	0
Mexico	1	0	0
Britain	0	2	0
Russia	0	1	2
Canada	0	1	0
Jamaica	0	1	0
Romania	0	1	0
Uganda	0	1	0
Bahamas	0	0	1
Belarus	0	0	1
Greece	0	0	1
Japan	0	0	1
Lithuania	0	0	1
Switzerland	0	0	1

Insults fly after women's 1,500 final

The graceful Sacramento, running an intelligent, tactically perfect race, stayed away from the bumping and grinding to win in four minutes 04.24 seconds. Jacobs clocked 4:04.63 and Weyermann 4:04.70.

Elana Meyer of South Africa falls during the women's 10,000 metres event at the 6th IAAF World Athletics Championships. Sally Barsosio of Kenya (C) won the gold medal with a time of 31:32.92 minutes ahead of Fernanda Ribeiro (No. 532) of Portugal and Masako Chiba (R) of Japan (Reuters photo)

592

TODAY AT

CINEMA TEL:634144
PHILADELPHIA "1"
Steven Spielberg's
THE LOST WORLD
(JURASSIC PARK)
Starring: Jeff Goldblum
& Julian Moore
 Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:634144
PHILADELPHIA "2"
Jim Carrey ... in
LIAR LIAR
 Shows: 12:30 3:30 6:15 8:30 10:30

CINEMA TEL:699238

PLAZA

*Harrison Ford
& Brad Pitt...in*

DEVIL'S OWN

Shows: 12:30 3:30 6:15 8:30 10:30

CINEMA TEL:677420

CONCORD

CONCORD "1"

*Liam Neeson &
Julia Roberts ...in*

MICHAEL COLLINS

(12.30, 3.30, 6.00, 8.30, 10.45)

CONCORD "2"

SPACEJAM

Shows: 3.30, 6.00 only

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AMN AI AI YA HO
performance starts at 8:30 p.m.
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For reservations call 625155

NO

592

Gunnell out in bitter blow to British team

ATHENS (AFP) — The disaster-prone British team at the World Championships suffered another major blow on Wednesday when former Olympic 400 metres hurdles champion Sally Gunnell was forced to pull out.

The 31-year-old had been due to run in the semi-finals on Wednesday evening but she failed a late test on a calf injury sustained during Tuesday's heats.

Gunnell's withdrawal is the latest in a series of blows to befall the British team.

Kelly Holmes, the team's great 1,500m hope, collapsed on the final bend in her opening heat with a damaged Achilles tendon, ruling her out of the championships.

Then the 400m metre runners, including medal hopeful Jamie Baulch, were not told by team managers that the final had been brought forward by 30 minutes, meaning they had to run without a proper warm-up.

Then high jumper Steve Smith, a bronze medalist at the Atlanta Olympics, failed to qualify for the final.

Gunnell's withdrawal is a cruel blow for the former world record-holder, who had suggested on Tuesday that she could challenge for a medal in her swansong championships.

Gunnell qualified for the semi-finals with a season's best performance of 54.53 seconds — the second-fastest time — when

finishing runner-up to Jamaica's Deon Hemmings Gunnell may now decide to bring her glorious international career to an end if the injury prevents her from competing in any of the remaining Grand Prix meetings of the summer.

She relinquished her Olympic crown to Hemmings last year when she crashed out of the semi-finals in Atlanta in tears after aggravating a foot problem, which also caused her to miss the world championships in Gothenburg in 1995.

The 1992 Olympic champion, who went on to take gold at the 1993 World Championships in a then-world record time of 52.74 seconds, almost quit after the centennial games.

She then vowed to give it one more season and won the European Cup for Britain in Munich last June.

Italy's favourite Brit out for more golden glory

ATHENS (AFP) — British athletes have had a miserable time at the World Championships so far and their misery will continue if Italy's British-born world long jump champion Fiona May retains her title here.

The 27-year-old from Slough, who took the world indoor title in Paris in March, was a good athlete when she competed for great Britain but it was when she moved to Italy after marrying Italian pole vaulter Gianni Lapachino in 1994 that her career took off.

"I love England but the difference between the English and Italians in both their attitude and funding to athletics means that in Italy you can make a living out of it without worrying about if the ball is going to be at the door," May said.

The difference in May's performances in the major championships has been astonishing since she swapped her British vest for the blue vest of Italy.

Prior to her departure to live in Florence, the best result the former world junior champion had managed at a senior level was sixth in the 1988 Olympic final. She had failed to qualify for the 1991 and 1993 world championships and the 1992 Olympic final.

Now the former economics graduate comes into the long jump qualifying round on Thursday with two world titles and an Olympic silver medal — although the latter was a bitter-sweet moment.

"I jumped over seven metres for the first time in my life but ended up second. You always want to do a career best in an

Olympic final — it was like a dream — the only problem being I needed to do 7.12 and I was 10 centimetres short," she said.

May, an elegant, leggy athlete, had the added misfortune to lose to the former Nigerian police inspector Chima Ajunwa, who served a four-year drugs ban that ended two months before the Olympics started.

"She did her time and she came back and won. It was a case of bad timing that the Olympics weren't in June last year!" May joked.

Since then May had the satisfaction of beating the Nigerian, who is coached by Eric Drechsler — the estranged husband of former world champion Heike Drechsler, who is also competing — in the world indoor final and declared that she was out for more of the same in Athens.

"It was real revenge. From now on it's going to be a duel between the two of us," she said.

"Technically, I feel more confident. I have made a few changes for the outdoor season which have worked so far," May said. Should May beat Ajunwa and America's golden girl Marion Jones she will be compared to Drechsler — a notion which would have been impossible to imagine if she had stayed in England.

To make amends, Lebanon will host Iraq in soccer game

BEIRUT (AP) — Lebanon, which refused to let Iraq attend the Pan-Arab Games here last month, will host that country's national soccer team at a friendly game, officials said Wednesday.

The Aug. 21 match would be Iraq's first clash with Lebanon's national soccer team in Lebanon since 1971, the Lebanese Soccer Federation said in a statement.

It said Iraq has confirmed its attendance. Iraqi officials were not immediately available for comment.

The federation dubbed the scheduled match as "the Arab solidarity meet," and the invitation is apparently meant to make amends for keeping Iraqi athletes out of the July 12-27 Pan-Arab Games in Beirut.

Just before the Games began, Iraqi athletes waited two nights at the Syrian-Lebanese border in vain, hoping to get an entry visa but were turned away.

This time, the Iraqi soccer team — part of a 30-member delegation of players and administrators — will fly in from Jordan Aug. 18 and return four days later, the federation statement said.

Iraq is banned from operating flights from Baghdad by United Nations sanctions imposed since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, which led to the 1991 Gulf War.

Iraq was kept away from the Arab Games due to pressure from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia who helped fund event.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

UEFA fine Steaua, Yerevan players

GENEVA (R) — European soccer's ruling body UEFA said on Tuesday it had fined Steaua Bucharest after a bottle thrown from the crowd during a recent European Cup qualifying match hit referee Hellmut Krug. In a statement released by its office near Geneva, UEFA said the Romanian club would have to pay 50,000 Swiss francs (\$32,700) after the July 23 incident during a match against CSKA Sofia. Steaua went on to win the tie 5-3 on aggregate. The committee also suspended Armenia's FC Yerevan players Mal-lai Ndiaye and Rasmik Grigorian for seven and six matches respectively after both were sent off for fighting during a UEFA Cup qualifier against Dnepr Dnepropetrovsk of Ukraine last Wednesday. Yerevan lost the tie.

Pavarotti backs Rome 2004 bid

ROME (R) — World-renowned Italian tenor Luciano Pavarotti has thrown his considerable weight behind Rome's bid to stage the 2004 Olympic Games. Pavarotti will travel to Lausanne, Switzerland, for the International Olympic Committee's vital meeting on September 5, when the successful candidate will be announced. Rome is favoured to win the bid, ahead of Athens, Cape Town, Stockholm and Buenos Aires. "It will be an honour to go to Lausanne," Pavarotti said after accepting an invitation from Italian sports minister Walter Veltroni. Pavarotti, along with Spanish tenors Placido Domingo and Jose Carreras, helped popularise opera with a concert in Rome's third century baths of Caracalla during the 1990 soccer World Cup finals.

Huber ousts Kournikova at Acura Classic

MANHATTAN BEACH, California (R) — Sixth-seeded Anke Huber of Germany crushed 16-year-old Russian Anna Kournikova 6-0 6-1 Tuesday in the first round of the \$450,000 Acura Classic.

"I'm a little bit surprised it was so easy," said Huber of her 41-minute dispatching of the world's 26th-ranked player.

But Huber, ranked 11th and last year's runner-up here, was proud of her performance.

"It was as close to a perfect match as I've played," said Huber. "I didn't let her into the match. I stayed aggressive, didn't miss many easy balls and served so well."

In other opening-round matches, fifth-seeded Arantxa Sanchez Vicario of Spain swept past Japan's Naoko Sawamatsu 6-2 7-6 (7-4) and eighth seed Kimberly Po of the United States bounced 18-year-old Spaniard Magui 7-5 6-1.

American Amy Frazier routed Russian qualifier Tatiana Panova 6-1 6-0, Ruxandra Dragomir of Romania edged Naoko Kijimuta of Japan 7-6 (7-2) 7-5 and 17-year-old Venus Williams whipped American compatriot Ann Grossman 6-0 6-3.

In the lone upset of the day, Russian doubles expert Natasha Zvereva beat seventh-seeded Irina Spirlea of Romania 6-4 6-3 for the second time in as many weeks.

The top four seeds — World No. 1 Martina Hingis, two-time titleholder Monica Seles, South African Amanda Coetzer and defending champion Lindsay Davenport — all received first-round byes.

Hingis, the 16-year-old Swiss prodigy with nine tournament titles this year and three in as many weeks in California, will meet 18-year-old Anne-Gaëlle Sidot of France Wednesday night.

Huber got lots of help from the error-prone Kournikova, who committed 13 unforced errors and only three winners.

Kournikova captured a three-set decision from Huber in the round of 32 at Wimbledon but the rust was obvious as she offered little challenge after a month-long layoff.

"She played unbelievable and I could never get into the match," said Kournikova after the worst defeat since turning pro in October 1995. "I beat her at

Wimbledon, so she was ready for this match."

Huber allowed Kournikova just four points while capturing the opening set in 16 minutes.

It did not get much better for Kournikova in the second set although the Russian avoided a whitewash before Huber ripped off the final five games with ease.

Because of her young age, Kournikova is allowed to play just 13 tournaments, and this was her eighth stop on the WTA Tour. "I didn't play well. It's hard for me to play one match during one month," she said. "I want to play more tournaments. I want to play more matches."

Kuerten trounces Agassi in first round

MASON, Ohio (R) — Rising tennis star Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil outclassed freefalling superstar Andre Agassi 6-3 6-1 in a brief 46 minutes Tuesday night in the first round of the ATP Championship.

"I was just playing all the points and when I saw it was 35 minutes, 4-love in the second set, I see that it was going pretty quick," Kuerten said.

"I think it was easier than I expected. I think I had control of the match and I was playing pretty good, solid and it was easier than I thought it would be."

The 33rd-ranked Agassi — the number one player in the world back in 1995, a former Wimbledon and U.S. Open champion, and a two-time tournament winner here — was unable to play a competitive match against the 10th-seeded Kuerten, the reigning French Open titlist.

"It is tough because I feel like a different player and that is not good," Agassi said. "I don't have a good sense for a match — where you can impose yourself."

In another first-round match, 14th seed Albert Costa of Spain came back from two match points down to American Jim Courier to win 4-6 7-6 (7-5) 6-3. Costa faced the two match points when serving at 4-5, 15-40 in the second set.

Three seeded players joined Agassi on the sidelines of this star-studded tournament featuring nine of the top ten players in the world.

Sjeng Schalken of the Netherlands upset 11th-seeded Mark Philippoussis of Australia 7-6 (7-5) 6-3 in a first-round match.

Eighth-seeded Thomas Enqvist of Sweden and 13th-seeded Petr Korda of the Czech Republic fell in second-round matches. Enqvist went down to Vince Spadea of the United States 6-7 (1-7) 6-3 6-3 and Korda lost to Jan Siemerink of the Netherlands 7-5 1-6 6-1.

Playing in his ninth tournament of the year, not including Davis Cup competition, Agassi has a paltry 6-9 win/loss record in 1997.

Out of action for all of may and June with a recurring wrist injury, Agassi has not won a match since beating Jaime Oncinas in



Andre Agassi

the first round of the Atlanta tournament in April.

When Agassi arrived at a post-match press conference following his loss, he appeared to be teary-eyed. Obviously the road back is becoming an ever increasingly uphill battle for the popular American.

"I don't need to be out there, but it is something I am choosing to fight for," Agassi said. "Why? Sometimes I'm not sure. But, you know, I have heard it six different times in my career that I don't have it, that I can't do it again and I want to do it for the seventh time."

"I want to get out there and I want to turn things around and feel like I can win these tournaments."

For Kuerten, who joined the ranks of the top 10 players this week following his journey to the finals of last week's tournament in Montreal, it was a second career victory over Agassi in as many matches. He defeated Agassi at Memphis this past February, a match Kuerten

describes as his first big career victory.

On Tuesday, Kuerten was all over Agassi from the outset.

Known throughout his entire career for his superb service return, Agassi was totally ineffectual in that department. Tuesday, against the Brazilian's first serve, Agassi won only 12 percent of the points. On Kuerten's second serve he did better, but still only had a 43 percent success rate.

Agassi opened the door for Kuerten in the third game of the match, netting a forehand at 15-40 to lose his service game. Service breaks in the ninth game of the first set and the second and fourth games of the second set put Kuerten into the tournament's second round.

The Brazilian faltered only once in the entire match, offering Agassi a break point opportunity at 30-40 while leading 6-3, 5-1. But he was not to be deterred, saving the break and closing out the match.

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WHERE'S THE GUESS?

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
A J
Q J 10 9 7
5 4 3
A 9 5 4 2

WEST
K Q 10 8 4 3
Q 5
A 10 6
Q 8

EAST
A 9 7
A 8
Q 9 8 7 6
A J 10 7 6 3

SOUTH
A 6 5 3
K 5 4 3 2
Q Q J
A K

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1: 1c 2c Pass Pass
4c Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: King of A

Some hands present optical illusion. Here, South's decision on how to play the trump suit appears to be a pure guess, but careful analysis should reveal the winning play.

South's decision to burgle into game after a single raise is more than a little aggressive. However, the three spades in the South hand made it likely that North would be short in that suit, making the bid more attractive.

West led the king of spades against four hearts, then continued with a low spade when declarer held up the ace on the first round. East followed with the nine first, then the seven. Since declarer still had to lose a diamond trick, the fate of the contract hinged on losing only one trump trick. The jack of hearts was led from the table and East followed with the six. Is it guess whether to play East for the queen or the ace and, if not, why not?

The key to success lies with the cards East played to the first two tricks. East showed a doubleton by echoing. If East has A Q in a trump, East can assure victory by rising with the ace since there is no dummy entry to repeat the finesse.

If East holds the queen, West, after winning the ace of trumps, simply leads another spade, and East will score the queen on an overruff. Therefore, the only hope for the contract is to play East for the ace and rise with the king of trumps. What an easy game bridge can be!

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For the new number for all other direct Embassy lines, drop the "8" and replace with "59."

The Embassy regrets any inconvenience.

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Prepare for the 'coming battle,' Arafat tells Fateh

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has called on his followers to prepare for "the coming battle," accusing Israel of trying to put an end to the peace process, his official news agency said Wednesday.

"We must prepare our movement in order to stand strong in the coming battle," Mr. Arafat said in a speech late Tuesday before members of his Fateh faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in Gaza City.

"A great battle is before us, and though it is more difficult we will wage it as we have waged our battles in the past," he said, quoted by the official Palestinian News Agency, Wafa.

"We must prepare our reserves on every level, our reserves of muscle and thought, our reserves of food. We must plan each step carefully and precisely," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is trying to raise problems in order to wipe out the Oslo Agreements," he said, referring to the Israeli-

Palestinian self-rule accords signed in 1994 and 1995. Mr. Arafat's Fateh faction of the PLO represents the backbone of his large apparatus of armed security forces as well as of the bureaucracy of the Palestinian self-rule authority.

Mr. Netanyahu has refused U.S. and international pressure to back off a tough series of security measures imposed on the Palestinians in the wake of a double suicide bombing which left 15 people dead in Jerusalem last Wednesday. Mr. Arafat has described the measures, including a punishing seal of the Palestinian territories and a refusal to pay millions of dollars in taxes owed to the cash-strapped authority, as a "declaration of war on the Palestinians."

Arafat urges NAM to help save peace process

In another development Wednesday, Mr. Arafat called on President Ernesto Samper in his capacity as Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) head to help save

the Mideast peace process, according to a government statement released Tuesday in Bogota.

"I hope you will make use of your position to help the Palestinian people," Mr. Arafat said in a letter to Mr. Samper, quoted in the government statement.

Mr. Arafat added he was surprised that "instead of waging war on terrorism and joining us to protect the peace process," Israel has taken retaliatory measures in the wake of last week's double suicide bombing. In response to Mr. Arafat's request, Mr. Samper "has taken steps to avoid a break in the peace process in the Middle East," according to the statement.

In his capacity as leader of the NAM, Mr. Samper visited Israel and Palestinian territories and met separately with Mr. Arafat and Mr. Netanyahu.

The 113-nation NAM was founded in the 1950s in response to the bipolar cold war world in which the U.S. and the Soviet Union competed for influence among developing countries.



Israeli right-wing extremists demonstrate Wednesday in Jerusalem to denounce the peace process and the Oslo autonomy agreements, which they say put Israel's security in danger. A few dozen activists chanting anti-Oslo slogans marched through the Mahane Yehuda market where two suicide bombers, thought to be Palestinian Islamists, killed 13 and wounded 157 people on July 30 (AFP photo)

Israeli prime minister tours bombed market before talks

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu lit

memorial candles in a bomb-ravaged west Jerusalem market Wednesday before talks with a high-level Jordanian team seeking to lower Israeli-Palestinian National Authority (PNA) tensions.

The right-wing leader visited Mahane Yehuda market a week after the blasts and demanded Palestinian President Yasser Arafat crack down on Muslim militants.

"The fact that the Palestinian [National] Authority has failed in its obligations to fight terrorism has resulted in these events," Mr. Netanyahu said during a 30-minute walk through the street market where 15 people, including the bombers, were killed.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali met with Mr. Netanyahu in his Jerusalem office as part of a peace mission following Egyptian efforts to lower tensions in the region.

Mr. Netanyahu is due to visit Jordan for talks with His Majesty King Hussein next week.

"In [Wednesday's] discussions, there will be no talk...about advancing the peace process until Israel is convinced the PNA has begun to fulfil its commitments to fight terrorism," said Israeli cabinet secretary Danny Naveh.

Less than 20 per cent of Israelis hold Netanyahu responsible for bombings

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) —

Fewer than one in five Israelis believes that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's

hardline policies were the root cause of last week's suicide bombings in Jerusalem, according to a poll released Wednesday.

The survey for Israeli public radio also found that half of those questioned favoured military counter-terrorist raids into Palestinian-controlled areas to prevent further bombings.

Officials in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) have warned that any attempt by Israeli forces to reenter the autonomous zones would result in bloodshed.

The survey was conducted by an independent polling institute after two suspected Islamic militants blew themselves up in a crowded Jerusalem market last Wednesday, killing 13 other people and wounding more than 150.

In response to the question "why did the

"All we are asking is that the Jordanian delegation convince the Palestinians that they, the Palestinians, should do exactly what the Jordanians are doing and that is fighting terrorism," Mr. Netanyahu's communications director David Bar-Ilan said.

Mr. Netanyahu shook hands with shop owners in the market — an election stomping ground for right-wing Israeli politicians — and put on a religious skullcap while lighting a candle and saying a prayer for the dead.

attack take place?" 18.9 per cent of those

queried blamed Mr. Netanyahu, saying his decision to slow down the extension of Palestinian self-rule and build new Jewish settlements had fuelled Palestinian extremism.

Another 33.9 per cent however said Mr. Arafat was responsible since he had failed to crack down on armed militants. This is also the position of Mr. Netanyahu's government.

Nearly 36 per cent put the blame on Hamas, which opposes Mr. Arafat's peace agreements with Israel and has claimed responsibility for the bombings.

Other respondents said the bombing was sparked off by a recent decision by the Israeli municipal government in Jerusalem to build another Jewish neighbourhood on disputed land in Arab east Jerusalem.

The poll was conducted among 500 adult

Israelis and had a margin of error of four per cent.

"The decisive majority of the public in Israel are not ready to accept a one-sided process in which attackers are sent from the territories of the PNA or by headquarters there and let it pass quietly. We won't let it pass quietly," Mr. Netanyahu said.

Israel closed the West Bank and Gaza after the twin bombing, stopping tens of thousands of Arab workers from reaching their jobs in Israel, paralysing trade and shutting down factories.

around in the region."

Al Thawra said Arabs should mobilise and prepare for political, military, cultural, economic and all sorts of battles against Israel.

"The [Arab] confrontation should be as big as the looming Zionist expansionist danger which is targeting our land and existence," it said.

Al Baath added: "As there is an absence of active and decisive international move and as it seems the U.S. has washed its hands of its role in the peace process, the region is reluctantly heading towards explosions that Israel and those who support it are responsible for."

Sporadic Syrian-Israeli peace talks hit a deadlock after Mr. Netanyahu said he would not hand back the strategic Golan in return for peace. Syria's key demand is

full withdrawal from the Heights, captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war. The daily Al Thawra said the U.S., as Israel's closest ally and main sponsor of the Middle East peace process launched in 1990, was to blame for the crisis facing peacemaking.

"It is important to hear the U.S. view and its evaluation of the criminal practices by Israel and its attempts to drag the region to explosions and wars..." it said.

"We are used to America's bias to Israel... America is primarily responsible for Israel and its behaviours and for the current crisis in the peace process and for Israel's military fooling

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'World not doing enough to stop Israeli closure'

JERICHO, West Bank (AFP) — A top Palestinian official rebuked the international community Wednesday for not doing enough to force Israel to ease heavy sanctions imposed on the Palestinians after last week's bombing.

"The international response has not risen to the necessary level. It has been faint and weak," chief negotiator Saeb Erekat told journalists in the West Bank town of Jericho.

Mr. Erekat said he sent out messages to 92 nations to describe the effects of the Israeli sanctions imposed on the Palestinians after the double suicide bombing

which killed 15 people and injured 150 in Jerusalem a week ago.

The sanctions, including a strict seal of the occupied territories, "take three million people hostage," he said.

He accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of "trying to blackmail the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), and exploiting what has happened to pick and choose as he likes from the self-rule agreements."

He said Mr. Netanyahu was also using the closure "to go ahead with his policy of demolishing houses and confiscating land."

Israeli authorities have demolished at least five houses in Arab east Jerusalem and the West Bank since the bombing.

Meanwhile, the anti-settlement group Peace Now said Mr. Netanyahu's government planned to build 16,000 new homes in West Bank settlements.

Israel eased slightly Wednesday the closure on the territories, allowing Palestinians to cross into the Gaza Strip from Egypt.

But Mr. Netanyahu refused U.S. demands that he significantly ease the security seal, which the Palestinians complain is strangling their economy.

Greece to aid Albania, legalise immigrants' status

TIRANA (R) — Greece agreed Tuesday to legalise the status of thousands of illegal Albanian immigrants in return for help in fighting cross-border crime, and pledged millions of dollars in aid to reconstruct the Balkan state.

In the first visit to Tirana by a foreign government minister since elections last month, Greek Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos said Athens would help Albania rebuild its economy, armed forces and police.

"Greece is interested in the existence of a strong, democratic Albania and we are determined to contribute to this end," Mr. Pangalos told a news conference at the end of a one-day visit.

Mr. Pangalos said a group of Greek military experts supported by a unit of 100 soldiers would remain in Albania to help reform the army after most of a 7,000-strong multinational protection force leaves the country by mid-August.

The world community has been eager to help Albania return to stability after months of unrest. International donors are due to meet in Brussels in October to examine ways to provide aid in the form of approved projects.

Turkish jets reportedly attack Kurds in Iraq

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (R) — State-run Anatolian News Agency (ANA) said Wednesday Turkish jets

backed by pro-state militia had bombed five rebel Kurd camps inside northern Iraq, but security officials in the region cast doubt on the claim.

ANA said F-4 fighter planes and helicopters, backed by 10,000 pro-state Kurdish militiamen, mounted the operation in the early hours of Wednesday, destroying camps which it named as Kelmehmet, Besta, Yassikaya, Karakovan and Meydankol.

But Ahmet Erturk, assistant governor of the Turkish emergency rule region, told Reuters: "There is no cross-border operation at the moment and there aren't any important clashes there."

Officials at military headquarters in Ankara said he

could neither confirm nor deny the reports but said they were checking the ANA account.

ANA gave no details of casualties during the operation but the bodies of five people killed in earlier clashes were found. It said the operation was continuing.

Thousands of Turkish troops launched a six-week-long operation into northern Iraq in May — one of many such bids — in an attempt to eliminate Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) units who use the area to mount raids into southeastern Turkey.

More than 26,000 people have died in 13 years of conflict between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK, which is fighting for self-rule in the mainly Kurdish southeast of Turkey.

Minister: Iraq expects quick U.N. approval of oil pricing

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq's oil minister, Lieutenant General Amer Mohammad Rashid, said Wednesday that the country expects quick U.N. approval of its new oil pricing mechanism and may export 2 million barrels per day (bpd) to make up for lost time.

Mr. Rashid made the remarks at a news conference in Baghdad. It was called a day after Iraq presented its pricing

proposal to the U.N. in New York. After it is approved, Iraq can resume exports under the special "oil-for-food" programme.

"We expect approval in a few days," Mr. Rashid told reporters. "Then we can sign contracts with buying companies."

Under a plan that went into effect last December, Iraq was allowed to sell up to \$2 billion worth of crude every six months to buy

needed food and medicine. Sales periods are divided into two — 90-day periods. The plan was renewed by the U.N. Security Council on June 8.

But the Iraqis linked the resumption of crude exports to U.N. approval of a new food distribution plan. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan approved the plan Monday.

Iraq exported oil at a rate of about 750,000 bpd during

the first phase of the programme, some 400,000 bpd via Turkey and 350,000 bpd through Al Bakr Port in southern Iraq.

To meet the deadline for this 90-day period, it will have to triple that output.

Mr. Rashid repeated the assertions of other Iraqi officials that the country was prepared to boost output to the higher rate.

"We hope to export at a capacity of 2 million bpd

to meet the scheduled time for our exports under the oil-for-food deal," Mr. Rashid said.

He added: "We can increase our exporting capacity to 2.5 million barrels per day in a few months after sanctions are lifted, and, within one year, we can reach a production capacity of 3.5 million barrels per day, which was our production level before the Gulf war."

The oil-for-food programme is an exception to U.N. sanctions, which were imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The sanctions ban the sale of Iraqi oil and bar air travel.

The U.N. Security Council has said they will not be lifted until Iraq complies with resolutions calling for the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction.

Helena Christensen to embark on singing career

LONDON (AFP) — Top model Helena Christensen is embarking on a solo singing career, the British press reported Wednesday. Paul Oakenfold, a Briton who heads the Perfecto Record label, has the Danish-born model booked for several singles and an album, under a \$850,000 contract. The first of her recordings is due out in early 1998. Christensen, 28, has already recorded a song with rocker Jon Bon Jovi, titled "Every Word Is A Piece Of My Heart."

China's floating population hits 70.73 million

SHANGHAI (R) — The number of people in China moving around the country in search of work has hit 70.73 million, the Business News said Wednesday. People aged between 15 to 59 account for 91.82 per cent of the total floating population, the newspaper said. Most of these people were labourers who had left the countryside and moved to cities looking for work, it said. Children younger than 14 years and elderly people older than 60 years accounted for 6.32 per cent and 1.86 per cent respectively, it said.

Britain's 'top people' back Charles marrying

LONDON (R) — The vast majority of Britain's "top people" believe Prince Charles should be able to marry whoever he likes, according to an opinion poll published Wednesday. The Times poll, a major boost to Prince Charles' increasingly open affair with Camilla Parker Bowles, was conducted among cabinet ministers, leading businessmen, academics and newspaper editors. Eighty-two per cent said he should not give up his right to the throne if he were to remarry and 83 per cent said he should remarry whoever he likes.

Flooded Irish pub stages fish races on the floor

DUBLIN (R) — Kitty Kelly's bar regularly found a novel way of dealing with the torrential rain sweeping across Ireland — they staged goldfish races on their flooded floor. Three of the fish, named Sonia, Sam and Ossie, swam their way up and down the bar floor to the cheers of dozens of patrons, the Irish Independent newspaper reported. To help the festive spirit along, owners of the pub in Clonmel, County Tipperary cut beer prices by around a third. The Irish Farmers' Association estimates recent flood damage at \$20.1 million, and the figure is rising as rain continues to pour.

Australian politician defends naked swim

SYDNEY (R) — An Australian politician, elected on a platform of promoting family values, said Wednesday there was nothing wrong with him swimming naked with his girlfriend and six-year-old son in a parliamentary pool. Tabloid newspaper posters around Sydney Wednesday screamed "MP in naked romp" and "naked in the house," as local media reported the night last year when Alan Corbett was caught by a security guard swimming naked in a private members' pool. But Corbett, a member of the New South Wales state parliament, defended his action, saying he was not ashamed of nudity within the family.

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